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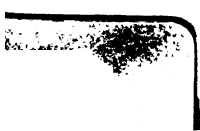
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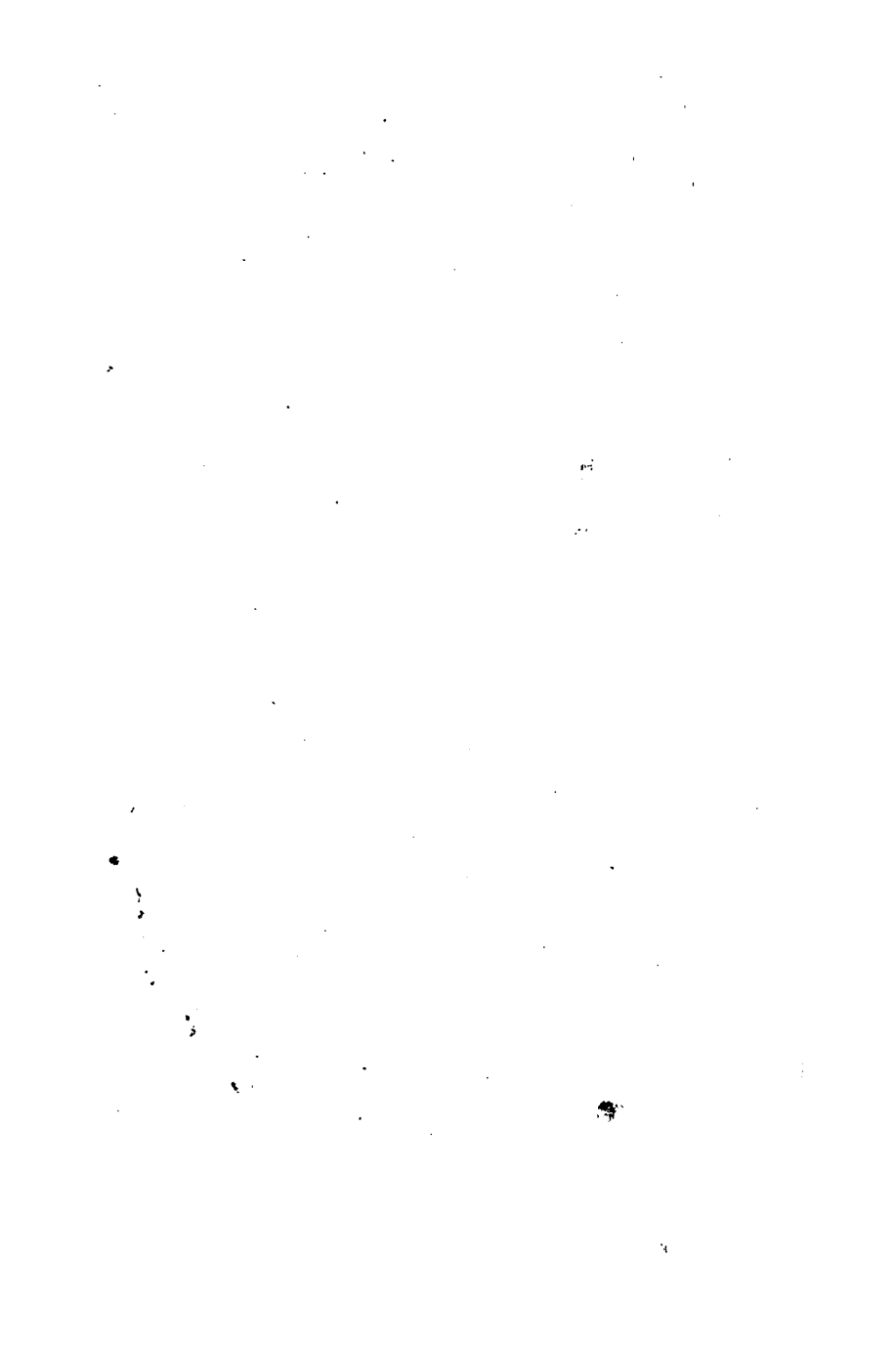
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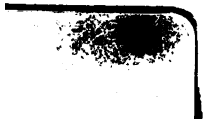


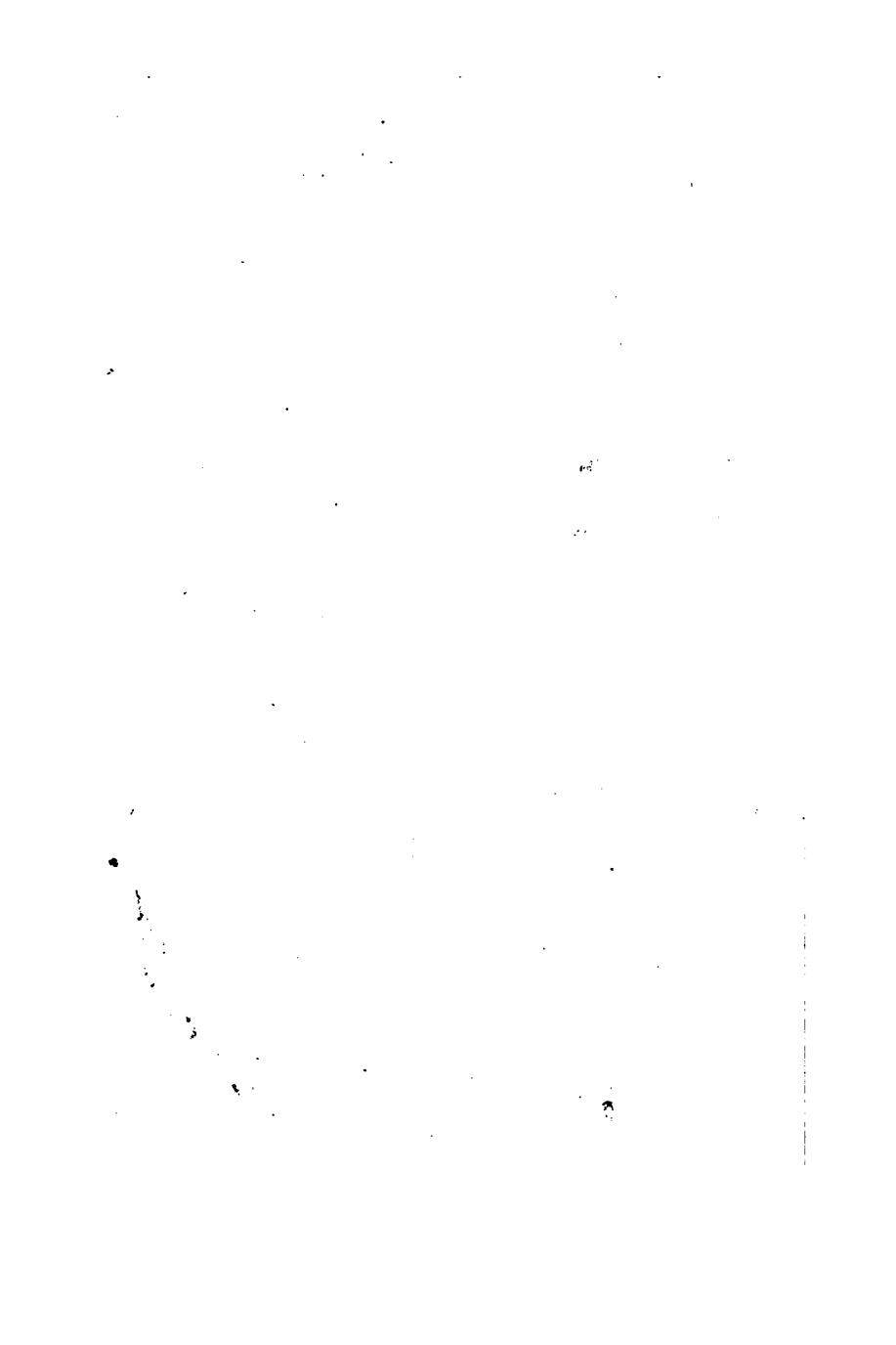


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THE
BEAUTIES
OF
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

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S.H. 1328.

THE
BEAUTIES
OF
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES,

Bishop and Prince of Geneva.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE
WRITINGS OF

JOHN PETER CAMUS,

Bishop de Bellay.

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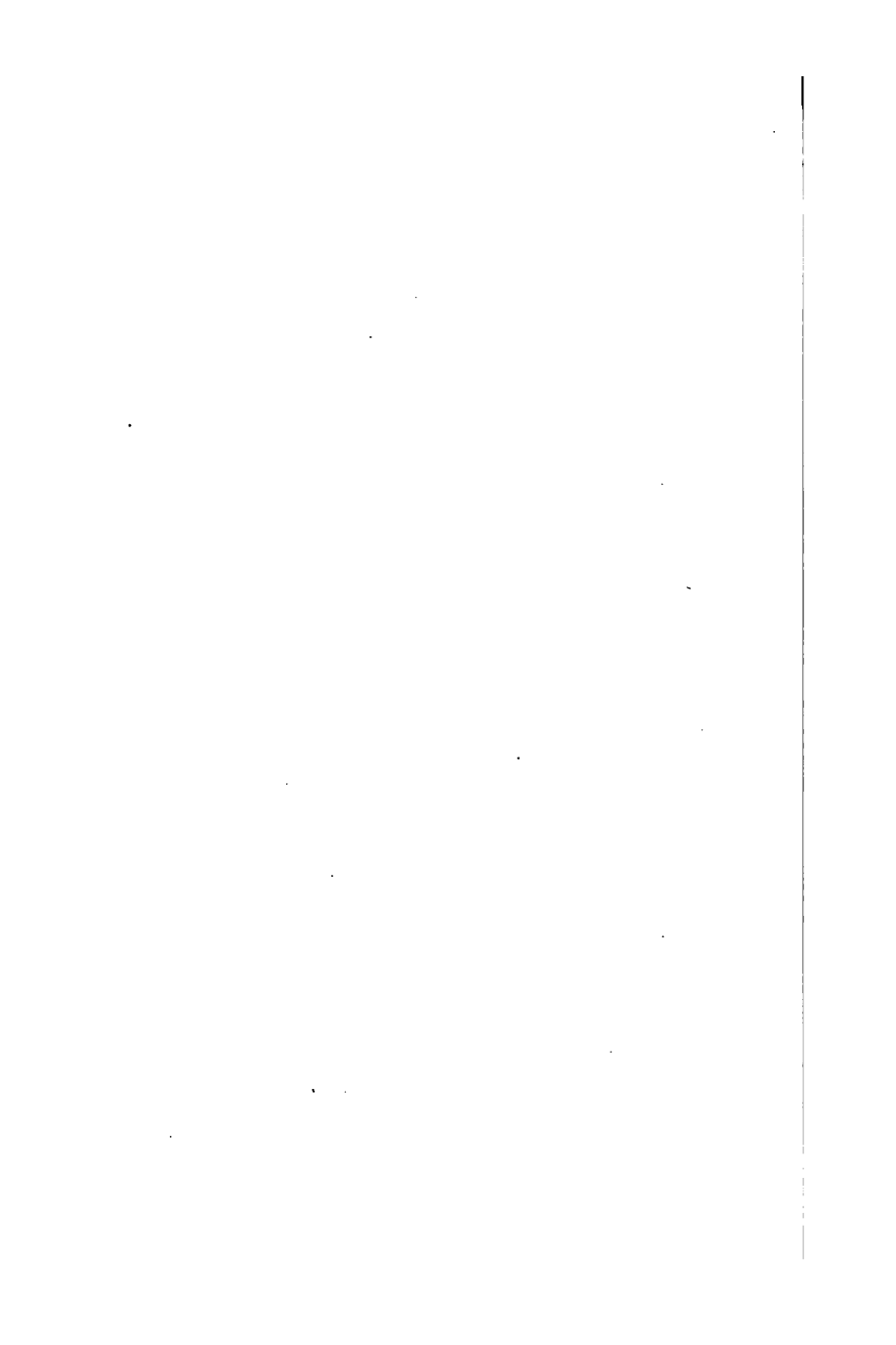
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PREFACE.

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THIS work is a Selection from the larger volumes of that brilliant and prolific Writer—the BISHOP of BELLAY: he professed to lay open to the world the Beauties of the Heart and understanding of his pious and highly gifted friend, the BISHOP of GENEVA; but excellent as his Writings are, he does not always confine himself to treat of the proposed subject only; on account of this, the following Selection has been made, which we hope will present our Readers with a full view of the many Virtues and great abilities of the mild ST. FRANCOIS. Some lively Anecdotes have been allowed to hold their station, to amuse the gay, while the more serious Chapters afford useful Instruction to the grave.

May GOD vouchsafe to bless, and render it subservient to his Glory.



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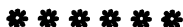
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AN ABRIDGED

MEMOIR

OF

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

AMIDST the vast number of pious characters that adorned the Romish Church, St. F. DE SALES shines a model of steady and undeviating virtue. From his infancy to the last moment of his life he maintained the same upright and pious character, or rather, his virtues increased with his years and grew with his growth.

He was born, August 21, in the year 1567, at the Chateau de Sales, in the Dio-

B

cese of Geneva. His father was Francis, the Lord of Sales, of a noble and ancient Savoyard family. His mother, Frances de Sionas, was of the house of Charansonet.

To great delicacy of frame young Francis united a strong mind. He was remarkable for early piety. It was even declared that the first words which he ever uttered were—"God and my mother love me." There was in his character a mildness, docility, obligingness, and modesty of which few children are possessed; and at an age when instruction is generally offered in the form of amusement, Francis occupied himself in reading books of devotion, in going to church, in becoming the advocate of the poor with his parents, and in sharing his meats with the hungry.

Though naturally very much engrossed by piety, he had also a decided turn for the belles-lettres and learning. His parents sent him to the college at Annecy, and there diligence seconding genius, he soon made great progress; but as religion

had excited in him no aversion to study, study never cooled his ardent devotion. He considered all his knowledge as a talent bestowed on him by God, and which therefore he ought unreservedly to consecrate to his service. The consequence was an early resolution to lead an ecclesiastical life.

After some time he was sent to Paris to continue his studies, where he learned Rhetoric and Philosophy from the Jesuits, and Theology, partly from the same instructors, and partly from the schools of the Sorbonne. In submission to his Father's wishes he often went to the Academy: his piety however met with no check from evil example or bad society.

From Paris he was removed to Padua, where his conduct was equally exemplary, and his deportment always amiable. He took his degree of Doctor of Laws with the applause of the University; and afterwards travelled to Rome, to visit the Sepulchres of the Apostles; thence to Loretto; after

which he returned to his family.

His father, who in so accomplished a son, thought he saw the germ of splendour, honour, and fame, formed lofty plans for his future life; but the views of Francis were far different. From his youth he had chosen the LORD as his heritage, though he did not declare his determination till after his parents had proposed to him an alliance befitting his rank. He then announced his resolution of devoting himself to the service of religion. His father was at first thunder-struck, but piously considering that the talents of his son were gifts from God, he was well aware of the propriety of employing them in the service of the Giver of all good, and therefore gave his consent.

For 60 years previous to the period of which we are writing, the Protestants, having become masters of Geneva, drove the Bishop from the town. He retired to Annecy, where he established his See. Pierre de Granier was then Bishop, and the post

of Provost in his cathedral being vacant, Francis was named to the office in the Pontificate of Clement VIII. The new Provost had not yet taken sacred orders, notwithstanding which, he immediately left his family to establish himself at his new residence. As soon as Francis was ordained Deacon, the Bishop resolved no longer to defer employing his great talents and piety for the benefit of his flock, and gave him a charge as a Preacher.

For the second time the Duke of Savoy offered him a civil office, which Francis refused. Having learned from St. Paul that the good soldier of Jesus Christ must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, he devoted himself entirely to his new duties. He met with astonishing success; and the Bishop of Geneva judged it expedient to place him in a wider sphere of action, and therefore made him the head of a mission to Chablais. He was accompanied by his relative Louis de Sales, and in spite of opposition, and even at the risk of his life, he

preached assiduously: and when forced to retreat he withdrew into the obscurity of forests, or hid himself in caverns amid the Glaciers. When the indignation of the people had subsided, he re-appeared, and his eloquence met with some success.

The Bishop of Geneva announced his intention of naming Francis his Coadjutor. The humble missionary trembled at the intimation, and requested eight days in which to form his determination, at the expiration of which time, he yielded his assent to the entreaties of the Bishop, and the Duke of Savoy. He then went to Rome, to obtain the Pope's blessing. Clement, who had heard of his extraordinary merit, received him with distinguished marks of esteem; and as a proof of his opinion of his abilities, he called on him to solve several difficult questions, in the presence of a great number of Cardinals. He there obtained vast applause, and was tenderly embraced by the Pope.

Notwithstanding the troubles and incon-

veniences occasioned by war between Henry IV. and the Duke of Savoy, Francis undertook a mission to the Diocese of Geneva. His reputation was now so great, that when he went to Paris his acquaintance was equally sought after. The Duchesses of Mercœur and of Longueville placed themselves under his direction. The King desired him to preach before the court during Lent, at a time when libertinism reigned and religion declined. He did so, with openness and impartial simplicity; and by his mildness and eloquence was the means of convincing many of their errors. The King was charmed with the preaching and the preacher, and wished to attach and retain him by large princely donations, which Francis manfully declined, leaving the King astonished at such uncommon disinterestedness.

Soon after, the aged Bishop of Geneva died, and the subject of our memoirs succeeded him in the Bishopric, and took up his residence at Annecy, where, with gen-

tleness and zeal he immediately commenced his important duties. He was once preaching during Lent at Chambéry, when intelligence was brought that the Duke of Nemours had besieged Annecy. The Bishop concluding that the pastor should share the dangers of his flock, returned into the town, wishing that he alone might run every risk and suffer every privation his diocesans endured. However the Prince of Piedmont raised the siege, and Francis returned to Chambéry.

He established at Annecy schools of philosophy, theology, belles-lettres, and jurisprudence, and at the same time he founded a seminary for the education of priests in piety and virtue, that they might be enabled by example and by precept to instruct the ignorant.

His first publication was "The Introduction to a Life of Piety," and named "Philothée," a work admired by the clergy and laity of all ranks and ages, and which was translated into several languages. This was

followed by a work "On the Love of God," entitled "Théotime." His first publication occasioned attempts to undermine his credit, not only with the public but also with the Pope, who, however, far from admitting doubts of the worth of Francis, entrusted to him an affair of importance. It was to heal a dissension between the Archduke of Austria, the Archduchess of Flanders, and some Abbeyes and Monasteries in Burgundy. Francis satisfied all parties, but found more difficulty in obeying another command, which was to reform two Abbeyes not in his own diocese. He had to undergo the insults and murmurs of the seditious monks; one of whom thrice attempted his life by firing at him with a loaded pistol; but God who never leaves nor forsakes those who commit themselves to him in well-doing, crowned his labours with success, and preserved him unhurt amidst these worthless men.

In passing through Belley, on his return home, he was requested to consecrate to

the Bishopric of that place, Pierre Camus. He did so. Camus had formerly been his friend, but subsequently to this their intimacy increased. The Bishop of Geneva regarding him with parental affection, while from the Bishop de Belley he received the veneration and esteem of a son.

No sooner had the Bishop of Geneva returned to Annecy, than an order from the King was brought, desiring him to attempt a reform of that parish. He instantly obeyed. But the Rhone having overflowed its banks, he was forced either to wait the subsiding of the waters, or to pass the bridge of Geneva exposed to the power of the incensed inhabitants. Rather than lose time he chose the latter expedient, to the perils of which he was almost blind. His followers were overcome with alarm; but he undauntedly trusting in God, proceeded to the gates of Geneva. When asked by the officer on guard who he was, with the utmost tranquillity he replied—"The Bishop of this Diocese." The officer instantly

gave him and his suite admittance. The Prelate traversed the town till he came to the opposite gate, through which he was obliged to pass—it was locked. Divine service was at that time celebrating in the town, when it was customary to fasten the gates. He waited without sign of fear for two hours, when, the door being opened the undaunted Bishop left the town with the same tranquillity he had entered it. When reproached for this act of temerity, he replied—"a little confidence in God, carries us through great dangers."

We must now introduce to the notice of our readers, the pious Baroness de Chantal, the new acquaintance of St. Francis de Sales. This lady was remarkable for her exalted virtues, devotion, and talents, no less than for being grandmother to the celebrated Marchioness of Sevigné; and the good Bishop thought he had found in her what he had long been wanting, to enable him to establish a new sisterhood of females. His design was to benefit the

church, by affording a safe retreat to those who from age, infirmities, widowhood, or poverty, could not enter into convents. He therefore proposed no hardships or extraordinary austerities, being well convinced that the mortification of the will, the affections, and the passions, is more agreeable to God than those corporeal austerities which often destroy the body and injure the understanding. His original plan was, that the women who entered this sisterhood should make very simple vows; and after the year of noviciate, should be obliged to visit and console the rich and poor; but he yielded to the reasoning of the Archbishop of Lyons, who disapproved of this part of the regulations.

He imparted this project to the Baroness de Chantal. She embraced with great joy the opportunity of co-operating in so beneficial a plan, under the conduct of so enlightened a man as the Bishop of Geneva. The establishment was formed at Annecy, under the title of "The Annunciation

of the blessed Virgin," in the year 1610; and so well did it succeed, that by the year 1665, one hundred and thirty religious houses on the same plan, were established in different parts of Europe.

The extensive good brought about by the efforts of this great man, procured him general veneration, and reached the ears of the Duke of Savoy; who wishing to honour as highly as possible an Embassy which he was about to send, under the conduct of his younger son, the Cardinal of Savoy, to the court of France, to demand the Princess Christina, sister of Louis XIII. in marriage for his son, the Prince of Piedmont, ordered the Bishop of Geneva to accompany the Cardinal. Francis obeyed. At Paris his former acquaintance and numbers who aspired to be named among his friends, crowded around him. He had scarcely time to satisfy the many demands made upon him,—sometimes for sermons, at others for public conferences, and also for private audiences. He complied with

all, and yet bestowed much attention on his sisterhood of the Annunciation, which he had recently established at Paris.

The marriage was celebrated with the wonted splendour of the French nation. Christina offered St. Francis the office of Almoner, in her household; but this appearing to him incompatible with his duty of residing in his diocese, he thanked the Princess with great respect and the warmest gratitude, and declined it. She then entreated him to assume the title, offering to dispense with his attendance. With more earnestness he refused the offer made by the Cardinal de Retz, a Bishop of Paris, to become his coadjutor; and nothing tempting him to desert his charge, he took the earliest opportunity of returning to Annecy.

He soon after received an order from the Duke of Savoy, to go to Avignon, where the Duke was to have an interview with the King of France. St. Francis was then very ill; but his duty to his prince

overcame his attention to his own health. Before leaving home he made a will, and visited and bid farewell to his sisterhood of Annunciation. He preached his last sermon with great energy, and then set off, followed, for the first league, by all the inhabitants of Annecy.

He reached Avignon the evening before the King was expected to arrive. He saw Louis, and received from him, in the course of a long conversation, every possible mark of veneration and esteem. After some days the court of France proceeded to Lyons, and the Duke of Savoy's followed. As it was now the depth of winter, St. Francis suffered severely from the coldness of the weather, during the journey; but though when he arrived at Lyons he was both weakened and fatigued, he declined lodging in the commodious houses offered to him, preferring the humble dwelling of the gardener belonging to the sisterhood of Annunciation. Christmas eve, Mary of Medicis, the King's mother, sent him a

command to go in her name, and plant the cross on the Church des Recolets, on which occasion the whole court went to hear him preach. The following day he administered the Holy Sacrament to the prince and princess of Piedmont; and in the afternoon preached at the Convent of the Annunciation on two novices assuming the habit. The next day he felt his sight and powers sensibly decaying. He exerted himself to celebrate mass, and thought that he had strength enough remaining to quit Lyons after dinner, but his debility so much increased that he laid himself down on his bed, and spoke only when addressed on religious subjects. He tried to console his weeping servants, at the same time entreating their pardon for the trouble he had occasioned them. An apoplectic fit came on, and on the evening of the 28th of December, 1622, he expired, in the 56th year of his age. He was canonized Dec. 28th, 1661, under the pontificate of Alexander VII.

It may here be expected that we should attempt to delineate the most striking features by which the character of St. Francis de Sales was distinguished, but the collection of Anecdotes and Aphorisms to which we now solicit the attention and indulgence of our readers, renders it unnecessary. Let St. Francis be his own panegyrist. His own thoughts and actions give a clearer idea of his great mind than our words could do.

AN ACCOUNT
OF
THE EVÊQUE DE BELLAY.

JEAN PIERRE CAMUS, Bishop of Bellay, was born in the year 1582. He was distinguished for learning and piety at an early age, and judged worthy of the Episcopal rank before he had attained the required age of 27. Before he was 26, Henry IV. named him to the Bishopric of Bellay,

to which he was consecrated by Francis, Bishop of Geneva.

He was a laborious and strictly moral man, and eager in seeking to reform the abuses crept into monasteries, on which he wrote a large book, entitled "The Monks." He composed with wonderful facility, but with too much rapidity for elegance. The number of his works on controversy, morals, mysteries, &c. is astonishing. His style, which is very metaphorical, suited the taste of his time.

Romances had gained great ground in France, and warped the minds of those who devoted themselves to studying them, from religion and purity. De Bellay took up arms against them; or rather he sought to overthrow their credit without entering the lists against such insidious enemies. And this he did, by working on the depraved taste of his patients, and curing them almost imperceptibly.

He wrote several stories, to which he gave a semblance of truth, and they might

have passed for such, but they were conducted in the method of fiction. They turned on intrigues, ingeniously concerted and neatly worked up.—Unexpected incidents agreeably surprised the reader, but without drawing off his attention from the thread of the tale. But in painting scenes of gallantry, which is expressly forbidden by St. Paul, he employed colours which excited contempt and disgust; so that the charms of fiction led the reader to the greater charms of truth: he was agreeably brought to what was firm and useful, and by this means thrown off from a love of that reading whose least fault was to rob him of his time. His books were universally read and admired:—they met with the success their pious author aimed at, in bringing back the minds of men to the love of religion and virtue.

After long assiduity in the affairs of his diocese, he began to think of retiring from social life, and of devoting himself to pre-

paration for another world:—the King acceded to his wish of naming Jean de Passelaigue his successor at Bellay; and after having given up his Bishopric, he retired to the abbey D'Anney, to exercise in retirement, those virtues, for which, in the tumult of public business, he found no time.

This Abbey, given him by the King, is situated in Normandy. The Archbishop of Rouen thought providence had sent this celebrated man to him, expressly to assist in the government of his diocese; and Camus, who still preserved his zeal, felt convinced that he ought not to bury his talents in solitude, when an opportunity presented of rendering them useful; and he who had lately been in an exalted station as a chief in the church, did not disdain to become vicar general to Monsieur de Rouen; renouncing his beloved retirement, and becoming, like St. Paul, servant to all, that he might gain some to Jesus Christ: so

true it is, that charity seeketh not her own, and is not puffed up.

After labouring successfully, his wish for solitude returned with renewed vehemence, and he resolved on bidding a final farewell to the world. He came to Paris, and fixed his abode in the hospital for incurables; but he was not permitted to remain long inactive, for the King named him to the Bishopric of Arras. He was always ready to submit to the will of God, and to yield to the service of the church, however widely distant from his own wishes. He therefore accepted the office; but before the Pope's Bull to invest him with it arrived, he died in his retreat, in the year 1652, and the 70th of his age.

Jean Pierre Camus, Bishop of Bellay, was one of the most pious prelates of the church in France. He had strong faith united to deep humility: a heart glowing with love to God, and zeal for the salvation of man. The greatness of his mind is discovered in his numerous writings, and

especially in his Letters to his friend St. Francis de Sales; which, like those of St. Francis, would have reflected honour on the piety of the primitive christians.

BEAUTIES

OF

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

TRUTH AND CHARITY.

IN speaking of brotherly correction, St. Francis gave me a lesson which I have not forgotten. He repeated it often, the better to impress it on my memory. "That sincerity," said he, "which is not charitable, proceeds from a charity which is not sincere:" a valuable saying, worthy of being deeply considered, and faithfully remembered.

He heard that when I commenced my Episcopal duties, I was animated with a bitter and illiberal zeal:—with equal indiscretion and ignorance, I spoke rash and

unwelcome truths; and uttered reproofs to those under my care, with painful asperity. He one day seized a fit opportunity for mildly correcting my violence, and repeated the golden maxim which I have just now recited.

I asked my friend how I was to distinguish when the principle from which correction proceeded was charity, and when it was not. With that solidity of judgment, which was to him an unerring guide, he replied:—"Truth proceeds from charity when its only aim is the love of God, and the welfare of man." It is the characteristic of charity that she seeketh not her own. In other virtues ourselves have some share,—our own happiness is mixed in them; but not so charity, as the Apostle teacheth us, her only aim is the glory of the object supremely loved,—her only means what conduces to that end. He, therefore, who reproves a sorrowing brother, if his intention is not purely the glory of religion, and the eternal felicity of his

fellow creatures, speaks truth from a motive less sacred than charity.

It is better to remain silent than to speak the truth illhumouredly, and so spoil an excellent dish by covering it with a bad sauce. But is not silence unjust? No, to speak would be unjust.—The justice of truth and the truth of justice are both founded in love for God. Judicious silence is always to be preferred to malevolent truth.

I asked St. Francis if there was no other way by which I might discern from what fountain reproaches flowed. He, whose heart was wrapped up in benevolence, replied in the true spirit of the great Apostle—"When they are made with mildness;—mildness is the sister of love, and inseparable from her. With this idea St. Paul says "she beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." God, who is charity, guides the meek with his counsel, and teaches his ways to the simple. His spirit is not in the

hurricane, the foaming cataract, or the tempestuous winds; but in the soft breath of the gentle zephyr.—“Is mildness come?” said the Prophet, “then are we corrected.” I advise you to imitate the good Samaritan, who poured oil and wine into the wounds of the unhappy traveller. You know that in a good salad, there should be more oil than vinegar or salt. Be always as mild as you can—a spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrel of vinegar. If you must fall into any extreme, let it be on the side of gentleness. The human mind is so constructed, that it resists rigour, but yields to softness. A mild word quenches anger, as water quenches the rage of fire; and by benignity, any soil may be rendered fruitful. Truth, uttered with courtesy, is heaping coals of fire on the head; or rather throwing roses in the face. How can we resist a foe whose weapons are pearls and diamonds? Some fruits, like nuts, are by nature bitter, but rendered sweet by being candied with sugar:—such is reproof,

bitter till candied with meekness, and preserved with the fire of charity."

But, said I, take it how you will, truth is truth, and I arm myself with St. Paul's words addressed to Timothy—"Preach the word in season and out of season; reprove, exhort, with all patience and doctrine." "The spirit of this saying," answered my friend, "consists in the last words—'with patience and doctrine:.'"—By doctrine he means truth, and this truth is to be declared patiently; that is to say, you must neither be overcome with difficulties, nor imagine that applause will follow your instruction; for if the Son of God was persecuted and opposed, his doctrine, which is truth, will also be opposed. Any man who desires to be a teacher of righteousness to others, should be content to bear injustice, and by his pupils to be paid with ingratitude.

This beloved and valued friend frequently reprimanded me for my faults. "I hope," he used to say, "that you consider this as

the strongest proof I could give you of my friendship. I shall know by your dealing with me in the same manner, whether you sincerely love me or not. But how is it that I find you so backward to do so? You are too circumspect; or the bandage of blinded affection is over your eyes, and you observe nothing. I cannot endure that any imperfection should remain unaltered in you, whom I so truly esteem. I wish my son to be like St. Paul's Timothy—irreprehensible. What would appear no bigger than a gnat in one I cared not for, is an elephant in you, whom, God knows, I truly love."

"Would you not blame the surgeon, and think him rather pitiless than merciful, who would let his patient perish rather than assume courage to probe the wound? A little prick, given seasonably with the tongue, is sometimes as beneficial to the health of the soul as a touch of the lancet is to the body. One bleeding may preserve life, and one reproof may save an immortal

soul from worse than death.”

In the year 1608, I was named to the Bishopric of Bellay, by Henry the Great; and in the following year was consecrated, in the cathedral church of Bellay, by the Bishop of Geneva, having obtained a dispensation on account of my youth, being then only 25 years of age. It was granted by the Pope, from the wants of that See, which for four years had had no Bishop. I afterwards felt some scruples as to the propriety of my consecration, which I detailed to St. Francis, my spiritual counselor. He consoled me and strengthened my mind, by urging several reasons, such as—the necessity of the choice,—the opinion that many men of worth and piety had entertained of me,—the judgment of Henry,—and finally, the order from the Pope. After all this, my duty obliged me, like the Apostle, to forget those things which were behind, and to press forwards to those which were before me. “You are come into the vineyard,” said my friend, “at the

first hour of the day:—Be careful not to labour carelessly, lest those later called, receive a higher reward.” I one day said to him,—exemplary and pious as you are reckoned, you have committed a fault in consecrating me too young. He replied, “I plead guilty to this sin, and dare not hope to be pardoned, for I have never yet repented of it. I conjure you by our common master, so to demean yourself, that you may never give me cause for remorse. I have often assisted at the consecration of other Bishops, but you are the only one to whom I rendered that office. Let us take courage, God will assist us in the performance of our duty:—He is our strength and our salvation; of whom then shall we be afraid? He is the defender of our life; what then shall we dread?”

HUMILITY.

ST. FRANCIS always discouraged professions of humility, if they were not very true

and very sincere. "Such professions," he said, "are the very cream, the very essence of pride: the really humble man wishes to be, and not to appear so. Humility is timorous, and starts at her shadow; and so delicate, that if she hears her name pronounced, it endangers her existence. He who blames himself, takes a by-road to praise; and like the rower, turns his back to the place whither he desires to go. He would be irritated if what he said against himself was believed; but from a principle of pride, he desires to appear humble."

ST. FRANCIS DISTRUSTS HIMSELF.

ST. FRANCIS was one day obliged to pass by the town of Geneva, to join a religious conference. In this journey he exposed himself much. I mentioned the circumstance to several persons in his presence; he blamed his own imprudence, but said nothing of his servants', who led him through so much danger, under an idea

that no one would dare to injure him. "Well," said I, "all that would have happened, would have been, that the populace would have assassinated you; and from a confessor, you would have risen to be a martyr!" "But how can you tell," he replied, "that God would have so blessed me, that I should have been endued with faith and constancy necessary to obtain the crown of martyrdom?" "I conjecture," said I, "that you would rather die a thousand deaths, than renounce your faith?" "I know," he continued, "that it would be my duty so to do, but I am no prophet; and though I know what I ought, I know not what I actually should have done. St. Peter was as resolute as could be, and yet you know that the voice of a servant overthrew his resolution. Blessed is the man who feels and fears his own weakness; who relies not on himself, and places all his trust in God. When he strengthens us we can do all things; without him we can do nothing."

OBEDIENCE AND AUTHORITY.

“How is it possible,” said I, “for a person invested with authority, to practise the virtue of obedience?” “Much more nobly and infinitely better” said he, “than those who are in subjection.” Astonished at this reply, I requested an explanation of his meaning, which he gave in the following words:—“Those under authority, are in general subject to some one superior, whose commands they must prefer to those of any other person; or who cannot obey any other without the permission and concurrence of their superior: but those in authority are less shackled—they have a larger sphere for obedience, for commonly in commanding they may obey, if they reflect that it is God who has placed them in their exalted stations,—that it is his will they should rule over their fellow creatures; if therefore they exercise command only because such is the will of God, is it not clear they are obedient? Even

monarchs, who have no earthly superior, and who render an account of their actions to God alone, may in this manner practise submission. But there is yet a higher point of christian humility, to which the highest ranks of men may attain: it is enjoined by St. Peter:—‘submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake.’ It is by this general compliance that we gain empire over the minds of others, and win them to christianity. It is then we make ourselves servants to all men, for the glory of our Lord.” I used to remark, that when any person accosted St. Francis, however insignificant, he assumed the appearance of an inferior addressed by a superior, never refusing to speak to any one, nor to listen to them, nor letting the least sign of impatience, weariness, or fatigue of mind appear, however importunate his visitors might be, or however they intruded on his time. He used to say “God wills that it should be so; he wills that I should be

thus employed, and this consideration satisfies me. While engaged in one manner, I am not required to be serving him in any other. Our centre is the will of God: removed from that, all is trouble and care."

SUBMISSION.

SUBMISSION to a superior is justice rather than humility, for reason requires that we should recognize him as such. Submission to an equal is friendship, civility, or good breeding; but submission to an inferior is genuine humility, for this makes us feel our own nothingness, and places us in our own estimation below the whole world. St. Francis practised this virtue in an eminent degree. He submitted himself in many things to his valet, as if he had been servant instead of master; and if study or business obliged him to sit up late at night, he used to dismiss him, lest he should be fatigued. He one morning rose unusually early, and called his

servant to come and dress him: the man slept so soundly, that the call was made in vain. St. Francis went into his dressing-room, where he slept, and seeing that he was not awake, dressed himself, and quietly sat down to write. At his usual hour the young man arose, and entering hastily into his master's room, started with surprise at finding him already dressed. He asked who had assisted him. "I dressed myself," said the good humoured prelate, "did you suppose I could not do so?" The servant in a surly tone asked if he could not have taken the trouble of calling him. "I do assure you, my good friend," replied his master, "I did call you, and then concluding that you were not in the dressing-room, I went to seek you; but there you were, sleeping so pleasantly, that I had not the heart to disturb you." "You are very pleasant indeed," murmured out the valet, "to make game of me thus." "I assure you," meekly expostulated St. Francis, "that far from making

game, I rejoiced that you were so comfortable; but set your heart at rest, I promise in future to call till you are awakened; and since it displeases you, I will not again dress without your assistance."

MONSIEUR DE BELLAY TRIES TO IMITATE
ST. FRANCIS' MODE OF PREACHING.

I esteemed my friend so highly, that all his actions appeared to me perfect. It came into my head, that it would be a very good thing to copy his manner of preaching.—Do not suppose that I attempted to equal him in the loftiness of his ideas, in the depth of his arguments, in the strength of his reasonings, in the excellence of his judgment, the mildness of his expressions, the order and just connection of his periods, or that incomparable sweetness which could soften the hardest heart;—no, that was quite beyond my powers. I was like a fly, which not being able to walk on the polished surface of a

mirror, is contented to remain on the frame which surrounds it. I amused myself in copying his gesture, in conforming myself to his slow and quiet manner of pronouncing and moving. My own manner was naturally the very reverse of all this; the metamorphosis was therefore so strange, that I was scarcely to be recognized:—I was no longer myself. I contrived to spoil my own original manner without acquiring the admirable one I so idly copied.

St. Francis heard of this, and one day took an opportunity of saying to me—“Speaking of sermons reminds me of a strange piece of news which has reached my ears. It is reported that you try in preaching, to adopt the Bishop of Geneva’s peculiarities.” I warded off this reproach by saying,—and do you think that I have chosen a bad example? What is your opinion of the Bishop of Geneva’s preaching?—Is it not better than my own? “Ha,” said he, “this question attacks reputation. Why he really does not preach

badly, but the fact is, that you are accused of being so bad a mimie, that nothing is to be seen but an unsuccessful attempt, which spoils the Bishop de Bellay without representing the Bishop of Geneva; so that you ought to do as a bad painter did: he wrote under his picture the name of the objects which they misrepresented." Let them talk, said I, and you will find that by degrees the apprentice will become master; and the copies be mistaken for originals. "Joking apart," rejoined my friend, "you do yourself an injury. Why demolish a well-built edifice to erect in its stead one in which no rules of nature or art are adhered to? and at your age, if you once take a wrong bias, it will be difficult to set you right again. If natures could be changed, gladly would I exchange with you. I do all I can to rouse myself to animation. I try to be less tedious, but the more haste I make, the more do I impede my course. I have difficulty in finding words, and greater still in pronouncing

them. I am as slow as a tortoise. I can neither raise emotion in myself, nor in my auditors—All my labour to do so is inefficient. You advance with crowded sail—I make my way by rowing. You fly—I creep. You have more fire in one finger than I have in my whole body. Your readiness and promptitude are wonderful; your vivacity unequalled; and now, people say, you weigh each word, count every period, appear languid yourself, and weary your audience.” You may well imagine how effectually this well-timed reproof and commendation cured my folly. I returned immediately to my original manner.

ON MILDNESS.

A YOUNG man was brought by his relative to St. Francis, to be severely reproofed for his irregularities;—to their surprise he spoke to him with his wonted gentleness; and with tears in his

eyes, bewailed the delinquent's hardened heart. His mother, he was told, had cursed her son. "Ha," said he, "this is the worst of all.—This woman will be taken at her word, and bitterly will she repent her malediction. Wretched mother! and yet more wretched son!" His prediction was soon after verified:—the misguided youth perished in a duel, and his mother died of a broken heart. Some person spoke to him of this too great mildness, with unqualified censure.—"What was I to do," said the Bishop, "I did all I could to arm myself with an anger that sins not;—I took my heart in both my hands, but I had not courage to throw it at his head; and besides, to say the truth, I was afraid that in one quarter of an hour, all the spirit of benevolence which for 22 years I have been gaining, should evaporate, like dew, in my heart. The bees are some months amassing honey sufficient for a man to devour in a single mouthful. And why speak to one who does not hear?

The young man was not fit to hear reason ; the light of his intellectual eyes was not with him. I should have done him no good, and myself much injury, and have been like a man who drowned himself in trying to save another person. Charity must be judicious and prudent."

ON PERFECTION.

"I HEAR of nothing but perfection," said my friend, "and yet I see very few persons who practise it. Each person has a perfection of his own creating. Some suppose it to consist in peculiarity of dress; others in abstinence in food; some in alms giving; some in frequently receiving the sacrament; some in prayer; some in mystical reveries; some in extraordinary inspirations. And yet all are equally mistaken: they take the means, or the effects, to be the cause. I know of no other perfection than to love God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself. Any other

notion of perfection must be erroneous. Charity is the completion of virtues among christians, and the only quality which properly unites us to God and to our fellow creatures, in which our aim and consummation consists:—that is the end of consummation, the consummation of every end, and they who say otherwise, deceive us. Those virtues which appear the greatest and most admirable, are nothing without charity. Not even faith, so strong that it may remove mountains, and penetrate into all mysteries; neither prophecies, nor the tongues of men and angels; neither bestowing all our goods to feed the poor, nor suffering martyrdom, profit any thing without charity.”

“Self command, temperance, prayer, and other exercises of piety, are admirable means for advancing to perfection, provided their motive is charity, and that they are practised in charity. Perfection must not be supposed to consist in the means only, but in the end to which these means

conduct; otherwise it would be like stopping in the midst of a journey and imagining yourself arrived at your destination."

I asked how this perfection was to be attained. "You must love God with all your heart," he replied, "and your neighbour as yourself." I do not ask whither I am to go, but what road I must take to arrive thither. "Charity," he replied, "is indeed admirable, for she is at once the means and the end, the road and the termination, the way which leads to herself; that is to say, the way to advance in perfection." "I will show you a more excellent way," said St. Paul. He then gave an ample description of charity. "Virtue is inanimate without her.—She is the life: without her no one can attain the end of all his wishes,—God himself; for she is the way; without her virtue cannot exist, for she is truth;—she is the life of the soul; by her we are translated from the death of sin to the life of grace. She gives life and animation to faith and hope. As the soul,

is the principle of life to the body, so is charity the principle of life to the soul." I know all that, I said, but what must I do so to love God and my neighbour? He replied—"You must love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself." You leave me, I continued, as ignorant as I was,—teach me how to love God, &c. &c. "The best, and the easiest, and the shortest way to love God with all your heart, is to love him with all your heart." He seemed to be amused at keeping me in suspense. At length he explained himself, and said—"Several persons have asked me this question. They want some secret for reaching perfection; but my only answer is, that I know no other way than to love God, &c. &c. And the only secret which I have for obtaining this charity, is to love God. We learn to study by studying, to speak by speaking, to run by running, to walk by walking; and so in the same manner we learn to love God and our neighbour by loving;

and those who take any other method, deceive themselves. To love God you must love him more and more; advance incessantly, and never stop to look behind you. Begin as an apprentice, and in time you will become master of this art. When you are advanced, strive to advance yet more; and never imagine your end attained. Charity may be progressively increasing to the last moment of our mortal career; and those who have made the greatest progress, will readily say with David, that they are only beginning; or with a celebrated saint 'when shall we begin to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves!'"

I well know, said I, that christian perfection is comprised in charity, and that charity is the love of God for his own sake, and of our neighbour for God's sake: but what is it to love? He replied—"Love is the first passion of our hearts, which inclines us to good will. To love God and our neighbour with real charity, is to

wish the glory of God for his own sake, and the happiness of man for God's sake." But what good can we wish for God, who is the supreme and essential good? "We may wish" he continued, "in two ways; by rejoicing in what he has and is, and that nothing can be added to his glory and infinite perfections; and by wishing that what he has not, he may have, either practically if it is in our power to procure it; or by our affection and desire if we have it not in our power." What is there that God has not, I asked. "I will tell you," rejoined St. Francis: "what is called extraneous, and which proceeds from the honour and glory rendered to him by his creatures, especially those who are endowed with reason. If we sincerely love God, we shall pay him all homage and honour; give him the glory and praise of all our good, or well intended actions; and not satisfied with so doing, we shall use all our diligence to induce our fellow creatures to do the same: and to love and

serve him, that every where and by every creature God may be adored. To love our neighbour for God's sake, is to rejoice in his welfare, in as much as he makes the blessings which he enjoys subservient to the glory of God,—to render him every service we can; to be zealous for his eternal felicity, and to be anxious to forward his salvation as our own, because it is the will of God that all men should be saved. This is true and genuine love to God for his own sake, and to our neighbour for God's sake."

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.

A PERSON once confided to St. Francis, that the most impracticable part of christianity was, in his eyes, forgiveness of enemies. "I know not how it is," said St. Francis, "or how God has formed my heart; for so far from finding forgiveness difficult, I think it so delightful that had I been forbid to love my enemies, I should

have felt great grief in obeying." He once expostulated mildly with a gentleman who was not inclined to consider him in a very amicable manner. After using several reasons to overcome his enmity, he concluded by saying—"After all, if you tear out one of my eyes, I shall look at you with the other as kindly as if you were my best earthly friend. It is true that there is some combat with the senses, but we must remember Paul's saying,—‘be angry,’ or, as it may be translated—‘be a little moved, but sin not.’ Oh, shall I not bear with him to whom God is lenient, when I recollect our Lord’s praying on the cross for his enemies? Our enemies have not persecuted *us*!—They have not crucified *us*! We have not yet resisted unto blood:—and how is it possible to forbear loving our enemies, for whom Christ prayed and died? For you must understand his prayer was not only for those who crucified him, but also for those who persecute us, and who persecute him in us,

This he plainly declares in saying to Saul —‘why persecutest thou me?’ which means, me in my members. We are not desired to love his vices, his hatred, his vindictiveness, for these are displeasing to God. But we must not confound the sin with the sinner, the precious with the vile, if we would resemble our Lord. The lesser fires are extinguished by wind, the greater increase by it. The best fish are nourished in the unpalatable waters of the sea, and the best souls are improved by such opposition as does not extinguish charity. Thus they are raised nearer to God, as the ark was lifted nearer to heaven by the waters of the deluge.”

MEMORY AND JUDGMENT.

ST. FRANCIS one day complained to me of his want of memory. This defect, said I, is amply recompensed by your judgment: the latter is the master, and the former is a servant, who makes great

noise, but does little service if judgment is not always with him. "It is true," he replied, "that strong judgment and strong memories do not usually reside in the same dwelling. Like two benefices, they require a dispensation to be held together. The same person may possess both qualities in a moderate degree, but it rarely happens that both are above mediocrity." I cited, as an example, the great Cardinal du Perron, that prodigy of memory and learning, whose judgment was excellent. He acknowledged and praised the Cardinal with a warmth which showed how highly he esteemed him. Indeed, these two qualities are naturally so dissimilar, that one is uneasy till it has banished the other. The source of the one is vivacity, the source of the other is solidity. Therefore, said I, you have no cause to feel discontented with your lot, since you have the best part,—judgment. I wish I could give you some part of my memory, which sometimes annoys me, and fills my mind

with such a superfluity of ideas, that, in preaching, or even writing, they overcome me. I also wish I had a little of your judgment, for, to tell you truly, I do not possess much myself. At this he smiled affectionately, and said,—“now I believe you to speak sincerely, for you are the first man I ever met with honest enough to confess his want of judgment. In general, those most deficient in it, think they possess the greatest portion; and those who think themselves the most gifted with judgment, I have generally found to be most in need of it.”

“Complaints of bad memory, and even of bad dispositions, are common enough. Few people seek to conceal such defects; but of the blessedness of poverty of spirit, or of want of discretion, no one pleads guilty: they are generally considered as disgraceful. But do not despair; you are young, and this is one of the fruits of experience and advanced age. The same cannot be said of memory. It is an un-

doubted defect of old age; and therefore I have no hopes that mine will improve. But if I always remember my God, that is enough."

LONG LIFE.

CONSIDERING his athletic frame, his robust appearance, his prudence concerning his health, and his temperance, I once remarked to St. Francis that I thought he would live to a great age. At the time I said this, he was about 42 or 43. He answered with a sigh:—"the longest life is not always the best, but rather that which is most employed in serving God." He added in the words of the Prophet,—“I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” Isaiah vi. 5. I thought he was affected at being far from his dear Geneva, as he called his Bishopric, and said, we are by the waters of Babylon, and weep at thinking of thee, O! Zion. “No, no,” he replied, “it is not exile which I bewail,—

I am well contented with our city of refuge,—this dear Annecy. I alluded to the state of exile of this life. As long as we remain here, are we not absent from our Lord, and away from our home? ‘Wretched man that I am!’” Rom. vii. 24. You have no cause to be discontented with this life, said I, where every object smiles on you. You have a constant gala,—your friends respect you, even the enemies of our religion honour you,—you are the delight of all your acquaintance. “All this,” said he, “is very unsatisfactory, and ought not to be relied on. Those who sang Hosanna to the Son of David, three days after, cried ‘crucify him!’ Besides, nothing is dearer to me than my soul; and I assure you, if any one could guarantee my life for as many years as I have already lived, with every blessing that could endear it, I should be dissatisfied, and find contentment very difficult. To one who considers eternity, how insignificant does time appear! This apothegm of Ignatius

Loyola strikes me as very fine.—Oh! how abject and vile this earth appears to me when I have been considering and contemplating Heaven!”

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

I COMPLAINED of the burden imposed on me by my Episcopal charge, and declared that had I foreseen the troubles it engaged me in, I would not have undertaken it. “You have great reason to complain, truly,” said St. Francis, “who have a little garden to cultivate, free from heresies; how would you groan beneath the weight of a diocese like mine, distracted by variety of opinions?” I should not have thought, said I, that in all France there was a Diocese more exemplary than yours;—better furnished with good Pastors, and with wise and virtuous Ecclesiastics. “It is true,” said my friend, “that, God in his goodness sends us winds suited to our sails, and lets us reap some good from our troubles. If it had been otherwise—if the

good seed had been taken quite from us, what a Sodom should we have become. However, we weep on the borders of the great stream, which flows from our Babylon, and comfort ourselves with the hope that the Father of lights will one day remove the darkness which envelopes us; and, that, after this obscurity, his light will shine on those poor souls who long have dwelt in the valley of the shadow of death. How would you groan beneath such a weight?" But, said I, why do you encumber yourself with those who have chosen to separate themselves from us? The lambs remaining for you to feed have such docility, that they are your joy and crown in the Lord. "I will judge you with your own words," he replied, "why do you not regard your own flock with the same eyes that you do mine? Think you that I esteem yours less docile? Be just; do not overrate the blessings which God gives to others, and then underrate or despise what are given to yourself. It is the

property of a little mind to say 'our neighbour's harvest is always more plentiful than our own, and his flock more prosperous.' Bless God, and be not ungrateful." After all, I observed, it is a heavy burden for either you or me. "Truly, it would be so, did we bear the whole; but the part our Lord bears, is in fact the whole.—He sustains us and our charge." But, do you consider the responsibility of answering for so many souls, as *nothing*? said I. He replied, "We serve a master rich in mercy to all who call upon him,—He forgives the heavy debt when we beseech him to have compassion. We must entertain sentiments of him, worthy his exalted goodness. We must serve him with fear; but, even while we tremble, we must rejoice. The humility which discourages, is not a virtue."

SOLITUDE.—ITS DANGERS.

SOME person having praised a life of solitude, calling it holy and innocent, St.

Francis replied "that it had its defects as well as a social life; and, as there are good and bad societies, so may solitude be good or bad:—good, when God draws us, as is said by the Prophet,—‘I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.’ Hosea ii. 14. Bad, when, as it is written—‘Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.’ Eccls. iv. 10. If, retiring into solitude was sufficient to transform us into holiness and innocence, perfection would easily be attained." It was observed that solitude presented few temptations, and fewer opportunities of sin. "There are demons," said he, "who traverse deserts as well as cities. There is no place where we shall not fall, unless sustained by grace. Lot was holy, in the most infamous of all cities, and a sinner in solitude. The nature of man is every where the same; and evil clings, as it were, to this mortal frame. Many persons deceive and flatter themselves into the

persuasion that they excel in some virtues, because they do not fall into the opposite vices. There is, however, a wide difference between not being enslaved by vice, and being triumphant in virtue. Not to be foolish, is one of the first steps towards wisdom; but it is too small a step to reach wisdom by, at once. To abstain from evil, and to do good, are very different, though the very abstinence is, in itself, a degree of goodness. It is like the foundation on which an edifice is to be erected. Virtue, consists not so much in habit, as in action. Habit, is an idle quality of it, which indeed disposes to do well, but does nothing till it is reduced into action. How can he practise obedience, who, in solitude, has no one to obey?—How learn patience, whom no one crosses?—How, fortitude, when there is nothing to be endured?—Humility, when there is no superior?—or, friendship, when, like a savage, he has fled from the society of men, whom he is commanded to love and esteem? Many vir-

tues there are which must die away in solitude, principally that mercy for which at the last day we shall be judged, and of which our Lord says—‘blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.’”
Mat. v. 7.

DO YOUR DUTY, AND LET THE
WORLD TALK.

As I was going to preach at Paris, during Lent, St. Francis taught me to be indifferent to what the world says, by the following recital:—

“The Principal of a college placed the great clock under the care of an idle man, to whom he thought the occupation would be an amusement; but, having tried, he declared that he had never found any act of obedience so tiresome or difficult. ‘Why,’ said the Principal, ‘you have only to wind it up regularly.’ ‘Oh no, not that, but I am tormented on every side.’ ‘How so?’ demanded the Principal. ‘Why,’ said

the poor man, 'when the clock loses a little, those who are labouring in the college complain; and when, to satisfy them, I advance it a little, those who are in the town come and abuse me because the clock gains. If, to please them, I retard it again, complaints are renewed on the other side: I am bewildered with their murmurs, for my head is like the bell against which the clock strikes.—I am attacked on all sides.' The Principal consoled him with this advice:—'Keep to true time, give gentle and obliging words, and all parties will be satisfied.' "

"Now," continued St. Francis, "you will be the butt for criticism, and, if you stop to listen to all that is said about you, you will find no end of the objections and cavils of men. The question is, how are you to steer your way by gentle and obliging words. But, after all, follow your own path,—be guided by your own taste and judgment, and do not seek to conform to the caprice of all your auditors. Look

only to God, and yield yourself to his guidance; — we do not desire to please men; why then should their opinion concern us. God, who reads the secrets of our hearts, is our judge, from him nothing is hid.”

TEMPTATION.

A DOG does not bark at the servants of his master's house, but at strangers. The devil does not take the trouble of tempting those who throw themselves headlong into sin, and become his voluntary slaves. When he torments a heart, it is a proof that the heart is a stranger. The more he redoubles his temptation, the more it appears that the heart is virtuous; for violent attacks are made only against places strongly fortified, and ably defended. “Did we know how to make a proper use of trials,” said St. Francis, “instead of dreading, we should seek, and even wish for them. But, much as we feel our weak-

ness, and often as our constancy is overcome, we have great reason to pray fervently—‘Lead us not into temptation.’ If, to this just distrust of ourselves, we add confidence in God, who is stronger to deliver us from temptation than we are feeble to fall into it, our hopes should rise on the foundation of our fears.—We should say with the Psalmist—‘I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.’ Psalm xci. 2. By him can we surmount all obstacles which are raised, like a wall, between us and our salvation. With such a helper, may we not boldly walk on the asp and basilisk, and tread the lion and dragon under our feet? As it is in great trials that we ascertain the force of our courage and of our fidelity to God, then it is also that we make the greatest progress in virtue.—Then we learn to use the Christian’s spiritual arms, and with them to overcome the malice of our unseen enemies.—Then does the soul of the Christian, strengthen-

ed by grace, appear more formidable to its foes than an army prepared for battle. Some suppose themselves lost when they are afflicted by impious or blasphemous thoughts—they think they have no faith: but while those thoughts are displeasing, they are innoxious,—they are violent winds, which force the tree to take deeper and firmer root in faith.”

THE BEST DISPOSITION FOR MEETING,
DEATH.

I ASKED St. Francis what disposition of mind was the best with which to meet death? He coolly replied—“a charitable disposition.” I remarked, that I knew that whosoever is not in charity is accounted as dead, and that to die in the Lord, was to die, not in the act, but in the habit of piety; which includes all other virtues, and introduces them into the heart, where she dwells. But, supposing the heart to be charitable, I desired to know which of

the qualities to which charity gives life, is most desirable to influence the last moments of life. "Humility and truth," he replied. "The bed of a dying man should have charity for its mattress; but the head should rest on pillows of truth, and humbleness of mind, and just confidence in the mercies of God. The first of these pillows,—humility, makes us see our own deformity, and tremble with fear, but with a grateful fear, (for charity must animate it) which leads us joyfully to embrace the hope of salvation. Humility, generous and firm, which, while it lowers our self-love, raises us to God, and makes us put our whole confidence in him. The other pillow is faith, and what is this but hope, strengthened by the consideration of the infinite goodness of God, more desirous for our happiness than we are ourselves. Oh, my God, I have trusted in thee, and shall not be confounded. Those who trust in the Lord, have redoubled strength;—they take

an eagle's wings, and soar to a height from which they cannot fall.

ST. FRANCIS CHECKS THE MURMURS OF
MONSIEUR DE BELLAY.

I COMPLAINED of some great hardships which I had experienced: it was obvious that St. Francis agreed in thinking I had been ill-treated. Finding myself so well seconded, I was triumphant, and exaggerated the justice of my cause in a superfluity of words. To stop the torrent of complaint, St. Francis said,—“certainly they are wrong, in treating you in this manner. It is beneath them to do so, especially to a man in your condition; but in the whole business, I see only one thing to your disadvantage.”—What is that?—“That you might have been wiser, and remained silent.” This answer came so home to me, that I felt immediately silenced, and found it impossible to make any reply.

GRACEFUL REMONSTRANCE.

SOME ladies of rank, at Paris, came to visit St. Francis, just after he had been preaching. Every one had some difficulty to state. They all at once assailed him with different interrogatories. He, knowing not to whom he should bend his attention, said,—“I will willingly reply to all your questions, provided you will answer one I wish to propose. — ‘In a society, when all talk and none listen, pray what is said?’ ” All were embarrassed, and remained mute, like the frogs in the fable.

MINOR VIRTUES.

THOUGH my friend possessed the most exalted virtues, he had, nevertheless, a great regard for the minor virtues; I mean those which men consider such, for all are great in the sight of God. “Every one,” he used to say, “wishes for the dazzling and showy virtues fastened to the summit

of the cross, which may be seen and admired afar off. Few try to gather those which, like mint and thyme, grow at the foot, and beneath the shade of the tree of life:—and yet they are the sweetest, and most watered with our Saviour's blood, whose first lesson to christians, is, 'learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart.' All the world cannot exercise the lofty qualities of magnificence, martyrdom, fortitude, constancy, valour. The occasions for putting them into practice, occur rarely; and yet they are universally sought after, because they are dazzling, and highly praised: and sometimes if a man has buoyed himself up with the vain idea of being able to exert and inflame his pride with lofty notions of his own ability, when the hour of trial comes, they fail him. Opportunities of gaining large sums, do not occur every day; but every day, one who is industrious, may add a trifle to his stock; and some, may in time become wealthy, by prudently managing slight

profits. Thus may we amass vast spiritual wealth, and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, if we employ in the service of God, the trifling occurrences of every hour."

"Great actions are of no value, if they are not actuated by charity, for that alone gives them solidity and value before God; and an action of a lesser virtue, (for all virtues are not in their nature equal) performed with ardent love to God, is more excellent, than what may appear greater, with a motive less pure. A cup of cold water, given for Christ's sake, 'shall in no wise lose its reward.' Matt. x. 42. Two mites, given by a poor widow from feelings of piety, were preferred by our Lord to the costliest offerings of ostentation."

"Little care is bestowed on trivial condescensions, to the ill humours and annoying caprices of our neighbour, to the gently bearing with his imperfections, to the mild endurance of scornful behaviour, to the love of contempt, and the humility of

preferring others in honour to ourselves, to the demeaning of ourselves for the benefit of others, to the replying meekly to asperity of language, to the bearing of ridicule, to the being mild in disappointment, to the receiving of favours graciously, to the humbling of ourselves before our equals and inferiors, to the treating servants kindly; all this appears little in the eyes of the worldling,—he desires no virtues but those which are great and superbly habited, which entitle to admiration and praise, without reflecting that the true servant of God does not seek the praise of man;—‘friendship with the world is enmity with God!’ ”

MEEKNESS.

I ONCE observed to a celebrated churchman, that I admired the wonderful meekness of the Bishop of Geneva, with which he governed all things in peace; he does what he pleases, said I, and in so mild a

manner, yet so firm, that no one can resist him:—a thousand fall at his left hand, and ten thousand at his right. Every thing, with him, tends to persuasion:—he attains his end with sweetness and energy;—before you think he has set out, he has reached the goal. He replied with great judgment, “It is that mildness, which renders him so powerful; know you not that steel is stronger than iron, but of a temper more flexible? ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.’ All they wish is in their power;—they reign over all hearts, and all are attracted by their sweetness.” It was a frequent Aphorism of St. Francis, ‘Blessed are the hearts which bend, they never break.’ “No, certainly they never are broken themselves, but frequently they break others to their opinions.”

DISTRUST OF OURSELVES MUST BE JOINED
TO TRUST IN GOD.

I ONCE asked St. Francis how I was to obtain a perfect distrust of myself. He re-

plied,—“by trusting entirely in God: trust in God, and humility of mind, are the two scales of a balance; the elevation of one, is the abasement of the other: the more we distrust our own powers, the firmer is our reliance on Omnipotence. When we entirely renounce ourselves, then is our confidence in God perfected.”

But, said I, will not the knowledge of my own errors and infirmities, prevent any self-confidence, without increasing my trust in God?

“Not,” said he, “if you are rooted in love, not if you are actuated by the motive of charity, or otherwise your lowliness of heart will not be a Christian virtue,—the fruit of Grace. The knowledge you speak of, could have no other effect than to fill you with grief, discontent, despondency, and indolence; but true Christian humility, is a distrust, hopeful, rejoicing, courageous, which enables us so say,—‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ Without that assistance, I can do no good

thing; with it, I can do all things, knowing that what is impossible with man, is possible with God, who can do all things, in Heaven and earth, for this our Lord said to his Apostles—‘fear not, I have overcome the World.’ ‘They that trust in the Lord,’ saith the Psalmist, ‘shall be even as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.’”

INEQUALITY OF DEVOTION.

THE following is one of the finest sentiments I ever heard my friend utter:—“It is a true sign, that we love God only in his works, when we love all equally; for as in Him there is no variableness, the variableness of our love must proceed from fixing our affections on other objects, rather than on God.” I could wish this sentence was written over every house, and in every room, and engraved on every book of piety you read, that it might be always before your eyes. It is the true touchstone

whereby devotion may be estimated. Oh! if our Ark had reached this eminence, we might say that like Noah's, it had attained the summit of the highest mountain, and stood firm on the loftiest pinnacle of piety! All then would to us be equal,—life or death, health or sickness, poverty or riches;—all the changes of this life, could not, I will not say agitate, but could not overwhelm our bark; for seeing in all things the hand of God equally good and merciful, when he chastises as when he indulges us, for his justice is no less the child of his infinite goodness than his compassion;—then should we perceive that his chastising hand wounded only to heal,—that his thunders transform themselves, as the Prophet said, into refreshing showers. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Thus firmly was the great Apostle's soul established, when he defied all creatures to separate him from the love which is in Christ Jesus!

SCRUPLES.

ST. FRANCIS used to say, that Scruples were rooted in the finest soil of pride:—he called it fine, because it is of so subtle a nature that it deceives those even, who labour in it. His reason for saying this, was, that those persons whose minds are affected with that malady, will never yield to the judgment of others more experienced in the ways of God:—they always seek to establish their opinions against superior wisdom and knowledge, whereas would they not rely on their own erring judgment, their malady would be cured. And is it not just, that the man should suffer, who will not take the remedies proper to restore his health, and which are offered to him? Who would pity a person, who, in the midst of plenty, starved himself to death? If the Holy Spirit teaches us in the inspired writings, that disobedience is a crime equal to Idolatry or Sorcery, what shall we say of those who idolize their own

opinions, and are the slaves of their own whims, chained to their own ideas, in defiance of every remonstrance, of every assurance given them that their fears are unfounded, always persisting in thinking themselves deceived, or misunderstood, or that they have not explained themselves with sufficient clearness. Wretched malady! Like that which is denominated jealousy, it feeds on all things, and is destroyed by none! May God preserve us from this evil state—this fever of the soul.

THE DESPONDING CRIMINAL.

ST. FRANCIS was invited to go to a prison, to visit a criminal under sentence of condign punishment, who could not be persuaded to seek consolation in religion, from a firm persuasion that sins so deadly as his, must be eternally punished. He told St. Francis, that he was the prey of the Devil, the victim of Hell! "Would you not prefer," said St. Francis, "to be

the prey of God, and victim of the Cross of Jesus Christ?" "Can you doubt it," returned the Felon,—“but how can God care for so miserable a wretch?” “Oh, my God,” said St. Francis, “remember thy loving mercies which have been ever of old, and thy promises not to quench the smoking flax, nor to break the bruised reed; Thou who willest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live, bless the last moments of this man.” “At all events,” he continued, “would you rather resign yourself to God than to Satan?” “Undoubtedly I would,” replied the Culprit; “but why is such language to be addressed to a man such as I am?” “It was for sinners such as you are,” said St. Francis, “that the eternal God sent his Son into the world,—nay, even for those who were worse, for his very murderers, for Jesus Christ came to save sinners.” “But are you quite certain,” asked the Criminal, “that it would not be too great audacity for me to seek to obtain mercy?”

"The audacity," said my friend, "would be in supposing the Divine Mercy other than infinite, superior to all sins of thought or deed; or in thinking that his His redemption was not sufficient to make Grace abound where Sin had abounded. On the contrary, his mercy, which is over all his works, and harmonized with justice in Christ, is elevated by the immensity of our sins; for the throne of mercy stands on the basis of human guilt."

By this conversation awakening in the mind of the Culprit, the long dormant seeds of faith, hope dawned in his heart; he resigned himself to the will of God, to be disposed of in time and in eternity as infinite wisdom saw fit.—

"But God is just," resumed the poor man, "and therefore must condemn me."

"If you throw yourself on his merey, he will pardon you;—He has promised remission of sins to all who seek it by contrition and humility."

"Well, I am in his hands, let him dis-

pose of me as is best in his eyes,—may he not do with me whatsoever he will, like the potter moulding clay?”

“Say rather, with David,” continued St. Francis, “I am thine, save me!”

At length he was brought to confess his sins, with great penitence and contrition, and died firmly, deeply impressed with a sense of his own sinfulness, and perfectly resigned to the will of God. The last words St. Francis heard him pronounce, were,—“Lord Jesus, I resign myself entirely to thee.”

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD ORDERS ALL THINGS.

ST. FRANCIS looked over secondary causes, and in all events considered the hand of God as ordering and governing all things. “Nothing can happen to us,” he said, “except sin, that is not ordered by God, whether prosperous or adverse, for God is the fountain of good. Every good

and every perfect gift comes down from him, who is the Father of lights; and there is no evil, not ordered by God, except Sin, which he only permits. Besides, properly speaking, sins cannot befall us:—an event proceeds from a cause; sin proceeds from our hearts. Oh what a happiness would it be for us, if we could receive all things as gifts from Him who opens his hands and fills all things living with plenteousness. How would this conviction soften affliction, —it would extract milk from the rock, and honey from the stony rock,—what moderation would grace prosperity, since God sends us prosperity and adversity; to draw from them His glory and our salvation. Think well of this, and accustom yourselves to see God in every dispensation of his all-wise providence, and in every event see only God; that in all things, God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be honoured; who consoles us in all our grief, and makes all events work together for good, to those who love him.”

A POOR MAN LONGING FOR ETERNAL
LIFE.

ST. FRANCIS was informed that a poor man, at the point of death, requested his blessing:—he instantly went to his cottage, and found him (though at the last extremity) perfectly collected, and rejoiced at once more beholding his Bishop. “I bless God,” said he, “that I am allowed to receive your benediction before I die!” When left alone with St. Francis, for the purpose of performing the sacred duties of Religion, he asked if he should certainly die. The Bishop, supposing him alarmed at the near approach of death, tried to reassure him, saying, that he had known persons recover from illnesses equally dangerous, and conjured him to place his whole reliance on God, in whose hands were the issues of life and death. “But, my Lord, do you think I shall die?” “My son,” replied the venerable Bishop, “a Physician would answer your question with more judgment than I can do; I can only say

that I think your soul appears in a very good state, and that you might be called away at a time when you were not equally well prepared. I advise you to give up all wish or care for recovery,—to throw yourself on the wisdom of Providence, and on the mercy of God; that he may do with you what he thinks best, and that, you may be assured, will be the happiest for you.”

“Oh, my Lord,” interrupted the peasant, “I am not afraid of death; my fear is, that I shall not die, and I have difficulty in resigning myself to prolonged life.”

St. Francis was astonished at hearing this. A wish for death, he supposed to exist only in minds in a high state of christian perfection; or, in those ill-principled persons, who fall into despair and melancholy. He asked if there was any thing that rendered his life particularly miserable, since he expressed a disgust at that, to which in general, men too fondly cling?

“This world,” rejoined the sick man, “is

to me, a matter of such indifference, that I am at a loss to imagine why it is so generally loved; and if God had not commanded us to remain here till he calls us away, I should long ago have ceased to live."

St. Francis, perplexed at these sentiments, concluded that his poor friend had some secret cause for uneasiness, which embittered his enjoyments, and led him so earnestly to long for death. He demanded if he had any secret calamity to bear, in his condition or health?

"Not in the least," said the peasant, "I have enjoyed excellent health, till I have arrived, as you see, at the age of 70; and as for worldly possessions, I have more than sufficient: and I thank God, I have never experienced poverty." St. Francis then asked him if his wife or children were such as to make him unhappy? "They make me as happy as possible," was the reply. "Never did they give me a moment's uneasiness; and if I could feel grief at the

prospect of leaving this world, it would be solely on their account." St. Francis not able to make out the meaning of all he said, now bluntly asked the motive of his extraordinary wish. "Because, my Lord," he answered, simply, "I have always heard in sermons, such fine descriptions of Paradise and another state of existence, that this world seems, in comparison, no better than a dungeon." Then, in the warmth of his heart, he expressed so many exalted sentiments of piety, that St. Francis could not refrain from weeping with joy. He saw that God had instructed the poor man, and that flesh and blood had not revealed those things, but the Spirit of God. Descending from his Heavenly remarks, he next pointed out the nothingness of earthly greatness—the insufficiency of earthly pleasures, in language so glowing, that St. Francis was struck with the most lively emotions of contempt for them. The Bishop acquiesced in the sentiments of the poor man; but to draw him from the little

extravagancies into which his enthusiasm led him, he urged him to attain a state of resignation and submission, either to live or die, as God saw fit; a few hours after which, the aged peasant breathed his last.

THE HEART CANNOT BE TOO MUCH WEANED FROM THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

THERE are terrestrial desires and celestial desires: of the last we cannot have too much,—they are wings that lift us up to God,—they are the wings of a dove, for which the Psalmist longed that he might fly away and be at rest. As for the former, which fix on unfounded and fleeting treasures, and which attach to the earth, we cannot divest ourselves of them too much. From these affections St. Francis was eminently weaned. He used to say, “I want very few things, and very little of those few: I have few wishes, and was I to be born again, I would aspire to have none.

In fact, the world is a mere trifle, or more properly speaking, it is nothing to one whose heart is set on things above, who seeks the Kingdom of Heaven, and its righteousness."

THE SCRUPLES OF A WEALTHY AND
BENEFICENT MAN.

At Paris, in the year 1619, a gentleman, rich in worldly possessions, and yet richer in good actions, came to visit the Bishop of Geneva.

The worthy man was anxious to know what hopes of salvation he might entertain, when encumbered with such vast possessions, and expressed great uneasiness lest they should prove impediments to the eternal felicity of his Soul. St. Francis asked from whence this fear arose. "From my wealth," he replied. "The scriptures, you know, describe the entrance of a rich man into Heaven, as so hard a matter, that it appears almost impossible he ever

should accomplish it." St. Francis, not able to give any opinion on a case of which he was ignorant, asked his visitor if any of his possessions had been unlawfully acquired. "Not in the least," he answered: "my Ancestors were men of wealth, and my hereditary estates are justly mine; the additions I have myself made to my fortune, are the fruit of prudent industry: God forbid that I should defraud any man, —my conscience does not reproach me with any breach of integrity." "But then," said the pious Bishop, "you perhaps make an ill use of your riches?" "I live suitably to my rank, but I fear I do not give enough to the poor, and for that, you know, I shall at the last day be judged." "Have you children," asked St. Francis? "Oh yes, but they are well provided for, and have no need of any assistance from me." "I really cannot perceive any foundation for your scruples," said St. Francis: "You are the first person I have heard complain of too great

prosperity; the world are apt to think they never can be rich enough."

He was well pleased at being able to satisfy the doubts of this worthy gentleman, in whom he found great docility and aptness to receive advice.

He afterwards heard that the rich man had formerly filled a public station with great credit, but had given it up to devote himself to Religion, dividing his time between exercises of piety and charity, going from the Churches to the Hospitals, or the miserable dwellings of the poor, whose wants he employed half his income in relieving. That in his wills, besides many pious legacies, he had bequeathed half his wealth to the Hotel Dieu, and the other half to his children; and, finally, that his life of active charity, was terminated by a pious and happy death.

REFORMATION OF THE HEART.

ST. FRANCIS used to say, that Grace generally imitated nature and not art,

which labours only to adorn the exterior, as may be observed in statuary and painting; whereas nature begins her labours in the interior, for which reason it is commonly said, that in human beings the heart first lives, and latest dies. When he sought to awaken souls to a life of Christianity, he did not exact seclusion from society,—he did not interfere with dress, equipage, or similar externals. He only spoke to the heart and of the heart; well knowing that when that fortress yielded, the rest would soon be subjugated. “When a house is on fire,” he said, “you will see the inmates throwing their furniture out of the windows. When the love of God rules in a heart, all concerns that relate not to God, appear to be trifles of no value.” A gentleman expressed great astonishment that a lady of high rank, and great piety, who was under the direction of the Bishop of Geneva, had not given up wearing her fine ear-rings. He replied to this, “I assure you I never remarked her ear-

rings; when I see her she is generally in a bonnet and cloak, and of her dress I am therefore totally ignorant. And also I believe that the pious Rebecca, who was so good a woman, lost none of her devotion by wearing the ear-rings which Eleazar brought her from Isaac."

A SAYING OF SAULERE.

ST. FRANCIS was very fond of the following Aphorism, learned by Saulere from his good countryman. Being asked where he found God, he said,—“Where I lost myself; — where I found self, there I lost God.” This reminds us of the two irreconcilable cities—Jerusalem and Babylon. It is like the loving of God better than ourselves, or the loving self better than God. The first of these built Jerusalem, but the second razed the walls of Babylon.

If sin is simply alienation from the Creator, and conformity to the creature, it is

obvious that Grace renews the heart, by turning it from the creature towards the Creator; and this is what our Lord teaches us—"Ye cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon." There can be no accord between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. To die to self and to the passions of corrupt nature, in order to live to Christ, is the true Christian life; but to die to religion and live to selfish gratification, is to pursue the road to death eternal. "If ye live after the flesh," says St. Paul, "ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

COLDNESS IN PRAYER.

When any one complained to the Bishop of not experiencing any inward consolation or warmth of devotion in the exercise of prayer, instead of expressing compassion, he used to say,—“I always prefer dry sweetmeats, to the more luscious syrups,”

and repeated these words of David—"my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2. The manna, that celestial food, the food of Angels, was a small dry grain, and when the people desired to exchange it for flesh, (a more agreeable nourishment,) while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God fell upon them. Few believe what is notwithstanding very true, that the union of a meek and faithful soul to God, is much firmer and much closer in the still small voice of humble piety, than in sensible consolation, or great fervor of devotion. The more the soul is pleased with the consolations of religion, the less is she fixed on the God of consolation. The bees which make most wax, are precisely those which make least honey. Can any one imagine a greater dearth of consolation than our Saviour experienced, when hang-

ing on the Cross he uttered those memorable words—"my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. Who can doubt of the strict union of our Lord to his Father;—a union in which consisted the fulfilment of all righteousness, in consideration of which, he said, "it is finished!" and in consequence of which perfect fulfilment, he committed his Soul into the hands of his Father. Blessed is the man who is constant in religion, though not enjoying its comforts.—This is the furnace in which the pure gold is refined.—Blessed is he who patiently endures this trial, because when thus tried, and thus purified, God will give him the crown promised to all who love him and are beloved by him.

SINGULARITY.

ST. FRANCIS worked hard at banishing every appearance of singularity from religious families, saying, it was a fault

which rendered piety odious and ridiculous. He wished external conformity in matters of indifference to our compeers in rank and situation, without any aim at notoriety, and cited the example of our Saviour, who, during his life on earth, was made like unto his brethren in all things, but without sin.

He practised himself, the lessons which he taught to others; and during 14 years that I was under his direction, and made it my study to remark all his actions, and even his very gestures and words, I never observed in him the slightest affectation of singularity. I will confess one of my contrivances, when he visited me in my own house, and remained, as his custom was, a week, annually, I contrived to bore holes, by which I saw him when alone, engaged in study, prayer, or reading; meditating, dressing, sitting, walking, or writing,—when usually persons are most off their guard, yet I could not trace any difference in attitude or manner;—his be-

haviour was ever as sincere and undisguised as his heart. He had, when alone, the same dignified manners, as when in society; when he prayed, you would have imagined that he saw himself surrounded by Holy Angels; motionless, and with a countenance of humble reverence. I never saw him indulge in any indolent attitude, neither crossing his legs, nor resting his head on his hand: at all times he presented the same aspect of mingled gravity and sweetness, which never failed to inspire love and respect. He used to say, that our manners should resemble water, best when clearest, most simple, and without taste. However, though he had no peculiarities of behaviour, it appeared so singular that he should have no singularities, that he struck me therefore, as very singular.

VIRTUE SHOULD NOT BE OBTRUSIVE.

A PRELATE came to visit our friend; he received him with his accustomed court-

esy, and persuaded him to remain some days at Annecy. On Friday evening, St. Francis himself went to the apartment of his guest, and asked if he would come to supper, which was just served.

“Supper,” said the stranger, “this is not the day for it; to fast one day of the week, is as little as we can do.” St. Francis left him to pursue his own inclination, desiring his servant to carry the Bishop such a collation as he wished, and himself went out to the eating room to sup with the Almoners of the guest and of his own family. The visitor’s Almoners said that their Diocesan was most exemplary in fasts, prayer, and all other religious exercises; that he never made the slightest deviation from his established rules on account of visitors—not that he refused to sit at table with them on fast-days, but that he carefully abstained from partaking of any food that was not meagre.

St. Francis one day in conversation on this subject, said to me,—“condescension

is the daughter of charity; and fasting is the sister of obedience. But if obedience is better than sacrifice, condescension should be preferred before fasting. We ought never to be so Pharisaically strict about pious habits, (however excellent in themselves), as not to be able on fit occasions, to interrupt them. Otherwise, under pretence of firmness of mind and steadiness, vanity glides in; and we forsake the end to grasp at the means. Instead of fixing our care on God, we fix it on the method of reaching to God. Now as for the fact we have been speaking of, a Friday's fast, thus broken, would have concealed many, and rendered unsuspected many other fasts, and to hide such actions from applause, is not less laudable than to perform them. God loves to be served in secret for his own sake only, as our Saviour teaches. You know what happened to the inconsiderate King of Israel, who displayed his treasures to the Ambassadors of a foreign Prince?—a

powerful army carried them off. No one who saw him sup on Friday, would have imagined that he fasted on that day: he might have deferred to the following day, or following week; or he might have omitted the fast, and exercised condescension instead; except when a vow has been made, and that must be adhered to till death. God must be served, let men say what they will.

FASTING.

ONE day St. Francis asked me if I fasted with ease? "With so much," I replied, "that I seldom have any appetite, and when I sit down to table it is without wish for food." "Then," said he, "never fast." "Why not, when it is so much recommended in the Scriptures?" "It is recommended to those whose appetites are stronger than yours. Do some other good work,—exercise mortification in some other way." "I have not strength to bear

bodily austerities." "Fasting is the severest of all, it is putting the axe to the root of the tree; others only prune the branches. A body, poorly nourished, is easiest subdued. Persons naturally temperate, have a great advantage for spiritual exercises;—their bodies, like well-trained horses, are managed without a curb." St. Francis was no advocate for severe fasts; the soul, he used to say, would not assist too weak a body; and the body, too much weakened, could not support the spirit. He liked moderation,—God would be served with reason, and though too full body may easily be weakened, it is difficult to repair the injuries of too great abstinence;—it is easier to wound than to cure. When the body is obedient, the soul should treat it as its child, and not destroy it: but when it revolts, it must be punished as a rebellious subject, as St. Paul says—"I keep my body in subjection."

MONSIEUR DE BELLAY CONSULTS MONSIEUR
DE GENEVA ON THE SUBJECT OF RELIGI-
OUS RETIREMENT.

I CONSULTED with him on the desire I felt to resign my Bishopric, and lead a retired life. In reply, he quoted St. Augustine's words,—“The love of truth divine, seeks a Holy retreat, to nourish itself at leisure; but the truth of love or real charity, leads us to undertake those employments which may most redound to the Glory of God.”

Though he preferred the part of Mary, called in Scripture the good part, he thought that Martha's, when undertaken for the love of God, more suited to this life, while Mary's is more conformable to Heaven. He excepted extraordinary instances of contemplative devotion, whose charms are almost irresistible, and thought that many who had not, like Martha, active talents, had more desire for contemplative life, like those who having passed the best years of their lives in labouring

for the souls of their fellow creatures, retire from the world to prepare in solitude for their latter end. He considered my desire of retreat, as a temptation, and persuaded me so much from it, that during his life I dared not prosecute my plan; but after his death, the wish returned, and seized such strong hold on my mind, that I determined to retire to a grotto, from whence, as from a haven, I might gaze at the world as it was,—“shaken by winds and tossed by storms.”

VARIOUS KINDS OF HUMILITY.

THE Bishop of Geneva divided humility into exterior and interior, and said if the first is unaccompanied by the latter, it is a very dangerous quality; it is the bark of a tree without sap,—a mere deceitful appearance, without reality; but if it proceeds from lowliness of heart, it is admirable in itself, and edifying to others. Internal humility he subdivided into the humility

of the understanding and the humility of the will. The first is common. Who is there who is not aware of his own weakness? From thence proceeds so many fine discourses on the littleness of human nature. The second is very rare, for few there are who love humiliation. It has many degrees of excellence,—first, to love humility; secondly, to wish for it; thirdly, to practise it, either in seeking occasions of so doing, or in willingly receiving them when they present themselves. St. Francis preferred the latter, for there is greater abasement in suffering cheerfully, and willingly receiving humiliations not of our own choice, than in chusing them ourselves. Our choice is exposed to temptations from self-love, if the intention is not very pure and very upright; and also because where there is less of our own there is more of God's will. When we are arrived at such a height of virtue, as to be pleased with abasement for the love of God, and to rejoice in tribulation, (as the

Apostle says) then the deeper this sentiment is, the more it is sublime.

POOR IN SPIRIT.

POVERTY of spirit, St. Francis used to say, comprised three excellent qualities. First, Simplicity; second, Humility; third, Christian Poverty. Simplicity, which consists in the unity of duty and affection towards God, attracts to that one grand object all the multiplicity of interests which are not of God. Humility, like poverty, sees nothing beneath itself; considers itself as the most worthless of all men, and estimates itself no better than as an unprofitable servant. Christian Poverty may be distinguished into three classes. The first is excellent, and may find entrance amidst wealth and prosperity. And such was the poverty of Abraham, of David, of St. Louis, who were poor in spirit, being ready to receive poverty with thankfulness, had it pleased God to have reduced

them to want. The second is doubly miserable, having all the inconveniences of poverty, with a tormenting desire of wealth. The third is what the Sacred writers recommend, to be contented with the state to which we are born, or to which some change of fortune reduced us; and then if we acquiesce willingly, and if we then bless God, we follow the example of Jesus Christ, and of his Apostles, who, we know, to have lived poor.

There is another mode of practising this poverty, for when, according to our Lord's advice, we sell all that we have and give to the poor, to follow him in that state of life which for us he endured; then do we enrich ourselves by poverty. This is worthily done, when he who has renounced wealth from principles of piety, works with his hands, not only to support his own life, but also to distribute to the poor. On this subject St. Paul says,—“I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: yea, ye yourselves know that these hands

have ministered unto my necessities.”
Acts **xx.** 33. 34.

THE FULNESS OF PIETY.

A **SUDDEN** loss of fortune befell a lady who was professedly very pious. This overthrow made her inconsolable; and in the violence of her grief she uttered words of such unwarrantable discontent, that it appeared as if she thought herself hardly used by Providence.

St. Francis, having tried to draw her thoughts from earth to heaven, asked her if God was not only more to her than wealth, but also than any other thing, however precious, and if having loved Him while abounding in temporal blessings, she was not equally ready to love him when having nothing.

“This discourse,” she replied, “is rather speculative than practical, and easier to talk of than to act upon.” “Certainly,” said St. Francis, “the person to whom God

is not sufficient, must be avaricious." The word Avaricious, so much softened her heart, (before hardened to remonstrance), that she could not refrain from tears, having always been far removed from avarice.

LOVE OF THE POOR.

Love does not only wish well, but it takes every opportunity of doing good; otherwise it deserves the reproach given by St. James to them who give to the poor, words, unaccompanied by substantial benefits. St. Francis had so much feeling for the poor, that in that only did he seem to have "respect of persons," preferring them to the rich both in spiritual and temporal concerns, as Physicians give most attention to the most alarming maladies. I waited one day with some other persons, to confess to him, while he was hearing the confession of a poor old blind woman, who begged her bread from door to door.

I afterwards expressed my astonishment at the length of time her confession took up. "She sees the things of God more clearly" he replied, "than many who have two good eyes." On another occasion I was in a boat with him on the Lake of Annecy, and heard the boat-men call him Father, with great familiarity. "Do you hear these good people," he said: "they truly love me. Oh, how much more do they please than the flatterers who call me 'my Lord!'"

ON SENECA.

I ONE day spoke of this sentiment of Seneca:—"That man has a good mind, who eats off earthenware with the same satisfaction and content as if his plates were made of silver, but greater is he who uses silver with the indifference he would earthenware." "This philosopher," said St. Francis, "speaks sensibly: the first

feeds itself with a fancy which is only vanity; but the second proves himself superior to riches, since he values them no higher than mere clay." I continued to extol the Heathen Philosopher, and declared that his opinions conformed to the precepts of the Evangelists. "Yes, in letter, but not in spirit." How so? I demanded. "The Scriptures," he replied, "teach us to be poor in ourselves, that we may be rich in Jesus Christ and his righteousness; to renounce ourselves, and entirely to depend on grace; instead of which, Seneca brings us back to self;—he desires that a wise man's happiness and contentment should be innate, which is manifest pride."

"The Christian Sage should be little in his own eyes, so insignificant that he should consider himself as nothing: but the Roman Sage, according to his fancy, must be above all things, and esteem himself lord of the universe, and maker of his own fortune.—This vanity is forbidden."

EAT WHAT IS SET BEFORE YOU.

ST. FRANCIS often repeated the Aphorism in the Scriptures,—“Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.” 1 Cor. x. 25. and used to say it was a higher degree of mortification to be able to guide our taste at pleasure, than to chuse always what was really the worse.

It often happens that we dislike the most costly viands, but to partake of them without testifying any signs of disgust, is severely to mortify the appetite. He considered it as uncourteous at table, to ask for any dish placed far off, in preference to what is placed near us, saying, that it showed a mind captive to ragouts and sauces. And if it is done not out of nicety, but to choose the least delicate, it appears like affectation, which can no more be separated from ostentation than smoke from lime. As one may be greedy about cabbage, so he may be temperate

about ortolans; but to be indifferent about the good and the bad, shews a mortified taste, by no means common. To eat what is delicious, without thinking of the flavour, is more difficult than to eat what is coarse with a relish. One day some eggs were brought him poached in water, and in speaking of eggs he used to say with St. Bernard, that the poor eggs were martyred a hundred ways; inadvertently he repeatedly dipped his bread into the water, instead of the eggs, which caused some persons present to smile. Having inquired the cause of their merriment, "You certainly were wrong," said he, "to undeceive me, for I never eat any sauce with more pleasure:—I suppose my hunger contributed to render the warm water so palatable, for there is an old proverb,—'There is no zest like hunger.'" This reminds me of St. Bernard, who, in mistake, drank oil instead of wine, and never observed the difference.

THE FOOD OF SOLDIERS IN LENT.

THE officers of a regiment, quartered, during Lent, in my Diocese, came to ask permission for the soldiers to eat eggs and cheese. I was not in the habit of giving such dispensations, unless in case of illness, and was a little embarrassed, especially as in that country Lent is so strictly observed, that the peasant would be scandalized at a permission to eat butter. I sent for advice to the Bishop of Geneva, (whose residence was only 8 leagues distant from Bellay) by a courier, whose employment was solely carrying my despatches to my friend. His answer was as follows:—
“I revere the piety and faith of the good centurions who have made you this request, which deserves to be printed, that it may edify not a Synagogue, but the Church; and would not only accede to it, but extend my dispensation to beef instead of eggs, and instead of cheese, let them eat the cows of whose milk it is

made. You are very scrupulous in consulting me on the food of soldiers; are not the laws of war and of necessity of greater force than all other human laws, and exempt from all exception? God grant that they may do nothing more reprehensible than eating eggs, cheese, oxen or cows: if they commit no other irregularities, there would be fewer complaints against them."

SOLITUDE.

It was one of St. Francis's beautiful remarks, that, in solitude we must love ourselves; in society, we must love our neighbour; and that wherever we are, we must love God above all, who ordained both solitude and society: he who does otherwise is unhappy every where. Solitude without God, is death:—Company without God, is more dangerous than desirable. Every where we are blessed with God; but without God we are blessed no where.

KNOW HOW TO ABOUND AND HOW TO
SUFFER WANT.

THIS saying of St. Paul's, the Bishop was very fond of. He observed, that knowing how to abound, was of the two, most difficult: a thousand in want fall on the left hand, but in prosperity ten thousand fall on the right hand. So difficult is it to keep the narrow path amid riches, that it made Agur pray—"give me neither poverty nor riches."

Moderation in prosperity, is compared by an old writer, to the bush which burned without being consumed, or to the three children who walked in the furnace untouched by the flame.

"Humility," says St. Gregory, "runs great risk amid honours, purity amid luxuries, and moderation is in danger amidst riches." Knowing both how to abound and how to suffer want with equanimity, is a sure proof that we see God in all things, since neither the sharp points of the one discourage, nor the con-

veniences of the other inflate. He, who with even temper can suit every situation, has reached the highest point of Christian perfection, and will find his redemption in the Lord.

ST. FRANCIS NEVER ASKED AND
NEVER DENIED.

ACCORDING to his maxim of asking nothing and refusing nothing, he was in the habit of accepting the little presents offered him by the Peasants. It was pleasing to see in what manner and with what feelings he received their handfuls of filberts, chesnuts, apples, or the small cheeses and eggs, brought by the poor; some would present him with half-pence, pence, or farthings, all which he received with humility, and expressions of gratitude. He would even receive the pence sent by the villagers to say Masses for them, and would perform them with deep attention. He used on leaving church, to distribute

the money to the poor he chanced to meet with, but the eatables he would carry home and give to his steward, with orders that they should be sent up to table.

RECREATION.

ST. FRANCIS never took recreation voluntarily, but always in compliance with the wishes of his friends. He had no garden, and never walked unless obliged by his company to do so, or ordered by his physicians, to whose orders he was very attentive. The mild St. Francis never avoided joining in conversation after dinner. When I visited him he was desirous to entertain me after the fatigue of preaching: he often took me in a boat to row on the Lake at Annecy, or to walk in the fine gardens bordering the Lake; and when he visited me at Bellay he never refused partaking of similar amusements when invited by me, but he never proposed them himself. When spoken to of buildings, paint-

ings, music, hunting, birds, plants, gardening, he never blamed those who applied themselves to them, but he would have wished that all occupations should have been used as means to raise the mind to God. He gave an example of this himself, drawing from all these things subject for elevation of thought. If plants were shewn him, "we are," he would say, "the field which God cultivates." If buildings, "we are the edifice of God." If a magnificent and highly ornamented church, "we are the temples of the living God, why are not souls equally well adorned with virtues?" If flowers, "when will our flowers mature into fruit." If pictures, "there is nothing so beautiful as a soul formed in the image of God." When brought into a garden, "when will the soil of our hearts be thus sown with flowers, thus filled with fruits, thus tended, cleansed, and cultivated? When will it be firmly closed to every guest, displeasing to its Divine owner?" At the sight of fountains, "when will the

waters of life spring up in our souls? How long shall we turn from the source of life, and make broken cisterns for ourselves? Oh! when shall we quench our thirst in the fountains of our Lord?"

Seeing a fertile valley, "how pleasant," said he, "are the waters that fertilize that valley; even so do the streams of Grace fertilize the humble soul, while the proud remain dry and arid like the summit of that rocky eminence." To a mountain, "I raised mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my salvation. The hills are a refuge for the goat." To a tree, "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down. A tree is known by its fruit."

MODESTY.

ST. FRANCIS so highly esteemed purity, that he could not endure the least action or slightest gesture which could tarnish its lustre. He used to call it the white

virtue of the soul. He would say as a comparison, that however bright, clear, and polished the surface of a mirror is, a light breath renders it dull and incapable of affording reflection. "And do you see yonder lily, it is the symbol of purity; it preserves its fair complexion and its softness, though surrounded by thorns, while it is untouched, but if you pluck the flower the strength of its perfume will make you giddy." He thought that to preserve purity, a scrupulous modesty should be maintained.

ST. FRANCIS LOSES A RING.

IN the year 1619, Christina of France, the King's sister, was married at Paris, to the Prince of Piedmont, heir of the house of Savoy. St. Francis accompanied the Cardinal of Savoy to the ceremony, and the young Princess of Piedmont esteemed him so highly, that she requested he might be named her Grand Almoner:

he was constrained to accept the office, but, on condition that it should not interfere with his Episcopal duties. He was in consequence under the necessity of attending the Princess of Piedmont to Piedmont, where he remained some days, and then desired leave to return to his Diocese. This permission was granted with great unwillingness. This illustrious Princess made him noble presents, and among them was a diamond ring, of great value. On the road, as he was passing the Alps, on horse-back, when drawing off his glove the ring slipped from his finger unnoticed. When his loss was discovered, he calmly blessed God for it, for two reasons, he said, "the first, that I shall not be tempted to set too great value on a jewel; the second, because under providence it will be the means of making the fortune of some person who may find it, and who may be rendered thereby comfortable for the remainder of his life, in which case, the loss is a gain." However, it turned out differently from

what he had expected, for, being found by a Peasant, ignorant of its value, and brought by him to the Village where St. Francis had stopped, it was sent him again, when he was very liberal to the Peasant who found it. One may see how little this good Bishop's heart was attached to what usually infatuate men. He knew that in Heaven treasures were prepared for him, superior to all that the world contained.

SELF DENIAL.

I ONE day, at dinner, helped him to certain viands, esteemed a delicacy, and observing that he quietly put it aside, to eat what was more common, "ha, I have caught you," said I, "where is your precept—'Eat what is set before you.' " He gracefully replied—"Do you not know that I have a coarse peasant-like appetite, and am not nourished without coarse food." "No, no, this is an excuse to conceal your austeri-

ties." "Certainly," he replied, "I am not an adept in finesse, and what I say is true. However, to speak candidly, without equivocation, I acknowledge that delicacies are no more pleasing to my palate, than unsavoury dishes. I need not eat salt or spices, or highly flavoured meats, to give my wine a zest: we Savoyards can enjoy it without all that. And as my business in eating is to nourish and sustain my body, I eat what best conduces to that end. However, to do honour to your admirable repast, have a little patience, and you shall be satisfied, for when I have laid a foundation of solids, I will then eat of the delicacies you help me to."

DUPLICITY.

ST. FRANCIS esteemed it a great crime towards God and man, to affect by our outward behaviour to disguise what passes in the heart. He called such persons double, masked, dangerous, and counter-

feit; and on such the Holy writings denounce heavy maledictions—"The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." Psalm xii. 3. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." James i. 8. He said that a well arranged exterior should proceed from a still better interior, that the cause might surpass the effect; it is from the root that must proceed the beauty of flowers and leaves, and the excellence of fruits. The interior should give life to the exterior, and then the exterior should preserve, clothe, and nourish the interior; as the fire produces cinders, which, in their turn, maintain the fire.

Without leaves, the tree would be unpleasant to the sight, the fruit unsheltered from the ardent rays of the sun would not come to maturity. So also the exterior adorns the interior, and is useful in preserving the heart. Though the part Mary chose (which was the interior) was good, that of Martha (busy in the exterior) had

also its peculiar merits; and when these two sisters unite in the service of Jesus Christ, peace reigns in the dwelling, and in the soul of the Christian. Learn of St. Francis to combine the qualities of the mind, and of action, by justness and sincerity; for as from the hue of the face we judge of the health of the whole person, so from the excellence of our actions may the piety of our motives be known.

INTENTION.

I WAS asked, whether after we have unintentionally done a good action, we may apply a good motive to it. I will answer in my friend's words;—"If sometimes the action precedes the intention from habit, take care that the intention follows close." If, before I have bowed my head to my superior I have not humbled my mind, by a sense of submission, at least this feeling of reverence must arise immediately after.

ACTIVITY AND CONTEMPLATION.

Is it possible, people say, that those Nuns whose vows oblige them to the employments of active life, which are so laborious and difficult, have not higher merit in the sight of God than those who are devoted to the tranquillity and ease of contemplation and of prayer? If by merit is understood the excellence of one mode of life over another, then the contemplative is certainly the noblest and most excellent. Our Lord, in his opinion on Martha and Mary, gave the preference to Mary. But if by merit is understood to which eternal recompences are chiefly promised, then must we give the palm for the sake of the blessing to charity, and say that those who design and act with most charity, have the highest merit, and may hope for the highest reward. St. Francis answered the question in these words:—"Let Martha be active, but let her not control Mary. Let Mary meditate, but let

her not condemn Martha;—our Lord would defend the censured person. So measure not spiritual things by temporal, nor temporal by spiritual, for as far as the Heaven is higher than the earth, so far are the ways of God above our ways. Let us neither weigh profane things by the balances of the sanctuary, nor sacred things in profane scales.”

IN WHAT PROGRESS IN VIRTUE
CONSISTS.

“ABOVE all things,” said St. Francis, “avoid haste; it is the great enemy of devotion. You had better do a little and do it well, than attempt much and do all indifferently:—It is not by doing much that we advance in the way of perfection, but by the purity and fervour of our intention. From this we may draw three conclusions;—first, our progress in virtue does not consist so much in the multiplicity of our actions as in the charity with

which we do them. Secondly, that one good action, proceeding from great piety, is more acceptable to God than many done with luke-warmness and indifference. Thirdly, that the purity of the motive raises the merit of the performance, because as the end crowns the action, the more excellent the end is, the more exquisite is the faith; and what end ought our actions to have, but the Glory of God? In private conversations talk little and well; and in actions do not undertake too much, but what little you do, let it be done well; what is well done, is done rapidly enough."

PERFECTION.

ST. FRANCIS said that the most important occupation of a sincere and faithful Christian, was to be constantly aiming at perfection in his own condition in life: that is to say, to be more and more perfect in the performance of the duties at-

lotted him by Providence. This perfection consists in using the best means to attain the best end; to seize every opportunity for advancing in Christian charity, in which is comprised Christian perfection, and without which, nothing can be perfect. For if a thing is perfect to which nothing is wanted, and if no virtue can reach its ultimate object—the Glory of God, except by charity; who does not see that without it no virtue can be called perfect, nor consequently enable us to be perfect in our situation in life.

“Above all things,” says the Apostle, “have fervent charity, for that is the seal of virtue, and not only unites us to God, in which our perfection consists, but which re-unites all other virtues, attaching them to their right centre—the Glory of God.”

IMITATION.

ST. FRANCIS advised reading the Lives of pious persons, who had lived in situa-

tions similar to our own, or which bore the nearest resemblance to them, in order that we might follow their examples. I told him one day, that my eyes were so constantly fixed on him, that I watched all his steps with such attention, that he must beware of his conduct when in my presence. "For I assure you," said I, "I shall imitate whatever I see you do, and right or wrong, think I am practising virtue." "It is a great pity," said he, "that friendship should be as blind as love, and unable to discern between the faults and the merits of the beloved object; it is a real pity, for I must live with you as if I was in an enemy's country, and your eyes and ears will seem to me like spies. However, I thank you for telling me your plan; a man forewarned is forearmed; it is like saying to me 'Child of the dust, beware, be vigilant, consider thy ways, for thou art watched by God and men.' Our enemies watch, that they may reproach us, and by their blame, injure us. Our friends

should watch also, but with far different intentions, that they may be enabled to warn us of our failings, and by blaming, to benefit us. But do you know, that if you neither do one nor the other, you treat me cruelly? You not only refuse to lend friendly aid to raise me when I fall, by kind warnings and advice, but you wish me to be an accomplice in the faults which your undiscerning imitation will cause you to commit. As for myself, I thank God I have other wishes for you; in all that concerns you, so jealous am I for the Glory of God, that I ardently desire to see you walk without obliquity in the ways of his laws; the slightest fault in you is painful to me; what are no bigger than flies, appear as elephants to me; and so far am I from wishing to imitate them, that I feel miserable till an opportunity occurs for telling you of them."

ON GOOD BOOKS.

To read usefully, we should read only

one book at a time, and that orderly,—I mean, from the beginning to the end.

This mode of reading I recommend, not only from its utility, but also on account of its being more agreeable; for thus, like travellers, refreshing ourselves in our route, by the perpetual succession and change of objects, we proceed to new ideas, which is agreeable to the mind. Those who read without regularity, and turn from one book to another, are soon disgusted with that occupation, which constitutes the best nourishment of the understanding, and one of the highest gratifications of life.—Reading, is to devotion, what oil is to the lamp. Physicians say that to preserve health, we ought to eat but one kind of food at a meal, the variety of dishes which cover the tables of sensualists, being injurious to it. I believe that Spiritual physicians may say the same of the Spiritual food drawn from study, and that a multiplicity of books is injurious rather than profitable.

VIRTUE.

It is a common error, and even among pious persons, to suppose ourselves possessed of virtues, whose contrary vices we do not fall into. It is incredible how many contentedly rest their heads on this false pillow. However, there is as great a difference between the action and the habit of a virtue, as there is between the action and the habit of the contrary vice. Ceasing to do evil, lessens the habit of vice, but is not sufficient to acquire virtue;—it must be exercised, and its fruits manifested. That a person should be mild, when not contradicted, offended, or irritated, is not surprising; it would indeed be matter of astonishment, if among compliances, submissions and respects, he should be otherwise. The most cruel and furious animals are tame with those who treat them well. Some dispositions there are, which appear all gentleness, when all their fancies are gratified; but only touch these mountains, and they instantly smoke,—There are live

coals hid beneath cinders. To be good among the good, requires no effort; but to be so among the wicked, to do good to those who hate us, to speak mildly, modestly, temperately to those who calumniate us, is to have a soul like the summit of a mountain—above clouds and storms. Those who descant with eloquence on mildness and patience, and who take umbrage at the merest trifle, and are ever complaining, shew that if the leaves of virtue are on their lips, the roots are not in their hearts. The virtue of constancy and constancy in virtue, cannot be acquired in a time of peace, when we are not assaulted by any temptations. Those who, when not contradicted, are very mild, but who have not acquired this virtue sword in hand, are certainly very exemplary and edifying; but when they are put to the proof, you will see them directly falter, and shew, that meekness was with them an illusion,—a shadow, not a reality,—devoid of strength or steadiness. There is great

difference between not yielding to a vice, and being master of its opposite virtue. Many seem very virtuous, who really have no virtues at all, because they have not laboured to acquire them. Sometimes our passions sleep, and if we do not seize the opportunity of strengthening our souls, and arming ourselves to combat them when they awake, we shall be vanquished in the encounter. We must always be humble, and not imagine that we have those virtues, though we do not fall into their contrary errors.

LOVE OF GOD.

WITHOUT this principle, a collection of virtues are no more than a heap of precepts. For this reason I join in the Apostle's earnest exhortation, that "above all things ye have Charity;" but do not rest satisfied with the mere sentiment,—“Let all your actions be done in Charity.”

St. Francis was never tired of repeating

the striking words of St. Paul, that "neither faith, almsgiving, knowledge, the understanding mysteries, nor martyrdom, profit without Charity." He used to say it could not be too deeply graven in the hearts of all Christians: for why run, if you do not reach the goal? Oh, how many good actions remain inert and useless, for want of this motive! and yet it is as little thought of, as if intention was not the soul of action, and as if God would accept and reward what was not intended for his Glory! Salvation is shewn to faith, is prepared to hope, and is given to Charity. Faith shews the way to the land of promise, like the pillar of smoke and flame—clear, yet obscure. Hope feeds us with sweet manna, but Charity gives us entrance, like the ark of the covenant, to the Celestial Country promised to all true Israelites; where the pillar of faith no longer guides, and the manna of hope ceases to sustain.

As the architect conducts his work, the compass, line, and rule in his hand; so to

build the walls of Jerusalem, and render our actions living stones, we should always have the plan of Charity before us: as the Apostle says—"Whether you eat or drink, do all to the Glory of God."

WILLINGLY, NOT BY CONSTRAINT.

THIS was my friend's favourite saying, and the secret of his government. He used to say that those who would force the human will, exercise a tyranny odious to God. He never could bear those haughty persons who would be obeyed, whether willingly or not, they cared not; those, he said, who love to be feared, fear to be loved; they themselves are of all people the most abject; some fear them, but they fear every one. In the royal galley of Divine love, there is no force,—the rowers are all volunteers. On this principle he always moulded his commands into the softer form of entreaty. St. Peter's words—"feed the flock of God, not by con-

strait," he was very fond of. I complained of the resistance I met with in my parochial visits. "What a commanding spirit you have," he replied; "you want to walk on the wings of the wind, and you let yourself be carried away with zeal. Like an *ignis-fatuus*, it leads to the edge of precipices. Do you seek to shackle the will of man, when God has seen fit to have it free?"

RESIGNATION.

"RESIGNATION," said St. Francis, "is shewn by struggles to submit; we would rather live than die; but if it is the will of God that we should die, we acquiesce. We wish it pleased God that we should live, yet we die willingly. We die willingly, but should live more willingly. Pious indifference is higher than resignation, for she cares for nothing except as it is the will of God; so that nothing can touch the heart indifferent to self, but the knowledge

of God's will. Resignation and indifference both look to the will of God: but the former looks with effort, the latter without effort: but simple desire is superior to either, for it inclines us beforehand to what God wills, without knowing what that will may be."

THE RECONCILED ENEMY.

ST. FRANCIS did not approve of the saying—"Never rely on a reconciled enemy." He rather preferred a contrary maxim; and said, that a quarrel between friends, when made up, added a new tie to friendship: as experience shews, that the callosity formed round a broken bone, makes it stronger than before. Those who are reconciled, often renew their friendship with increased warmth; the offender is on his guard against a relapse, and anxious to atone for past unkindness; and the offended glory in forgiving and forgetting the wrongs that have been done to

them. Princes are doubly careful of reconquered towns, and preserve them with more care than those the enemy never gained.

MAGDALEN AT THE CROSS.

ST. FRANCIS had particular delight in contemplating a painting of the penitent Magdalen at the foot of the cross; and sometimes called it his manual, and his library. Seeing a copy of this picture at Bellay, "Oh!" said he, "what a blessed and advantageous exchange the penitent Mary made; she pours tears on the feet of Christ, and from those feet blood streams to wash away all her sins." To this thought he added another:—"How carefully we should cherish the little virtues which spring up at the foot of the cross, since they are sprinkled with the blood of the Son of God."

What virtues do you mean? He replied:—"Humility, patience, meekness, be-

nignity, bearing one another's burthen, condescension, softness of heart, cheerfulness, cordiality, compassion, forgiving injuries, simplicity, candour,—all, in short, of that sort. They, like unobtrusive violets, love the shade; like them, sustained by dew: and though, like them, they make little shew, they shed a sweet odour on all around."

Are there any on the summit of the cross? "Yes, many; they are those which have great brilliancy when accompanied by ardent Charity: such as prudence, zeal, justice, munificence, liberality, almsgiving, fortitude, chastity, exterior mortification, obedience, meditation, constancy, contempt of the world;—all desire these qualities, because they are most excellent, most esteemed; and sometimes perhaps, because they render us illustrious and estimable: however, we ought to prefer them, only because God prefers them; and because they are the most excellent method for us to testify our gratitude, faith, and obedience."

SINCERITY.

ST. FRANCIS had quite a horror for the axiom that—"we should love, as if one day we might hate; and hate, as if one day we might love." Certainly, the latter part of this worldly proverb is the most tolerable; it is better to hate with moderation, and a prospect of one day being reconciled, than to nourish implacable animosity, more worthy a demon than a man. It is consonant with humanity to be roused to anger, but it is execrable to be inflexible and unforgiving. To hate them with the intention of proceeding to love, is being, in some measure, pre-disposed to reconciliation. He was asked to explain Sincerity. "Sincerity," said he, "resembles honey without wax; that which is purified from all dross. Such is a mind free from all duplicity; then it is called sincere, frank, cordial, open; without any concealment or reserve. Sincere persons are good friends, and are the salt of society: but the double-minded man is unstable in

all his ways—He mistrusts all men, and is generally mistrusted—a true Ishmael—his hands are against every man, and every man's hands against him.—His tongue is like a two-edged razor; and when he speaks of peace, he tries to conceal some malignity.”

REASON AND REASONING.

ST. FRANCIS used to say that reason is not deceitful, but reasoning is so. When any business, any complaint, or any difficulty was laid before him, he listened with patient attention to all the reasons that were formed on the subject; and, having much prudence and judgment, after weighing them all, he used to determine between what was of weight and what was not. And when people persisted in maintaining their opinions, by reasons apparently plausible, but which were not strong enough for justice to rest on, he used to say, courteously, “These, I perceive, are your reasons; but

do you perceive that all your reasons are not reasonable." If it was retorted—"this is accusing heat of not being hot," he replied that "Reason and reasoning were things widely different; that reasoning was the road that led to reason." After this, by gentle degrees, he tried to bring the false reasoner to truth, which cannot be separated from reason, they two being in fact, one and the same. People do not always follow the line of strait reason;—the obstinate stumble at their own opinions. It requires a strong mind to feel its weakness; and it is a sign of prudence to yield to advice.

JUSTICE AND JURISPRUDENCE.

THERE is a great difference between moral justice and legal justice. The just man is equitable, and renders to every one his due. The man of justice is an official person—a magistrate, who professes equity according to the rules of jurisprudence.

They were originally intended to maintain individual right, according to the rules of integrity; but by the evil dispositions of men, it sometimes happens that they are the means of depriving men of possessions they ought to guarantee to them, and the wealth falls into the hands of those who fight for it. From whence the proverb,—“While two contend, the third enjoys.” The multitude of laws and lawyers, stifle justice, which is like a silkworm entombed in its own net.

OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE is not shown in submitting to a mild and gracious superior, whose orders are in fact, entreaties, but in bearing the yoke of one rigorous, severe, and imperious. The indulgence of superiors is often injurious to inferiors:—we take away sugar from children, that they may not be made ill by it. Too mild a superior, renders himself despicable; and men obey

more from inclination, than a sense of duty towards God. A rigorous superior proves the sincerity of heart of his inferiors; for as they can have no motive of obedience but love to God, the action is heightened by the purity of the intention. To obey a ferocious, savage, ill-humoured, thankless master, is to draw clear water from a fountain streaming from the jaws of a brazen lion. As Samson says, "it is to find food in the devourer."—It is to see God only.

LEARNING.—CONSCIENCE.

KNOWLEDGE adorns piety, as we see in many erudite churchmen, who have united learning and devotion in an exemplary manner; but when they are to be compared, there is no one who would not prefer a pure conscience to the deepest science.—Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. There is a degree of ignorance which is quite inexcusable, when it makes

the blind lead the blind; but when you praise a man for piety, it is clear that he possesses that true light which guides to Christ. Though he has not great endowments to enable him to shine in the pulpit, yet it is enough if he, as the Apostle says, "is able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus i. 9. Thus did his charity hide the defects of his brethren, and teach us to prefer one ounce of piety to many pounds of learning.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.

ST. FRANCIS was called on to pray by a person extremely ill, and who showed, and really possessed, great fortitude, though her sufferings were severe. "She has found," said St. Francis, "honey in the jaws of a lion." But as he loved well-founded virtues, he sought to discover whether this patience proceeded from a really Christian submission to God, or from a less pure motive: he therefore praised her firmness, exaggerating her suf-

ferings, extolling her courage, silence, and example, knowing that by so doing, he should discover the spring of her actions. Nor was he deceived. This excellent woman, in whom patience had done its perfect work, replied—"Hush, reverend sir, you do not see the struggles of my feelings; you do not know the mutinies of my heart: certainly there is much discontent; and if the fear of God, and the grace of God, did not strengthen my understanding, long ago would the rebellion have been complete. I am like the Prophet whom an Angel carried in the air by the hair of his head; so small a hold has patience on me, if God had not helped me I should have failed, and been put to confusion. It is not I, but the grace of God in me, which enables me to support these sufferings. On my part all is deceit and dissimulation: if I followed my inclinations, I should murmur, lament, be sullen or peevish, but God holds my mouth as with a bridle, so that I dare not complain

of the punishments he inflicts on me, and which, by his Grace, I have learned to respect and be grateful for."

When St. Francis left the lady's room, he observed to those who were near him "This is indeed Christian patience: we have more cause to be grateful for calamities than to murmur at them, for in them are resignation, meekness, and fortitude perfected. But do you observe how blinded she is by Divine mercy, to her own excellence? Patience is not only courageous,—it is grateful and humble. But do not repeat to her what I have said, lest it should prove an incentive to vanity, and that would spoil the whole beauty of this grace, which flows only in the valley of lowliness of mind: let her possess her soul in patience—she enjoys peace, though in anguish."

FIDELITY IN TRIFLES.

A GENTLEMAN playing at a game, deceived his antagonist. St. Francis, who

was present, and could not endure to see such meanness, shewed him his fault.

“Ho!” said the gentleman, “you know we are only playing for farthings.”

“If you had been playing for gold, what would you have done? He who is faithful in a little, will be faithful in much; but the man who will deceive for a pin, will do so for a crown.”

To this I add another saying of my friend:—

“Great fidelity to God, is shewn by abstaining from little faults: great crimes naturally excite horror, and are therefore less difficult to be avoided.”

BE SATISFIED.

ST. FRANCIS used to say that the covetousness of the eyes consisted in never looking down to what is beneath one's self, but always above; by which means the covetous man is never satisfied, never at rest.

As soon as a man wishes to be greater or

richer than he is, the wealth and honour he possesses cease to be of value in his eyes: and when he has obtained the object of his wishes, his appetite increasing by being fed, he is perpetually toiling on, and never can arrive at his end, death cutting short his plans, hopes, and expectations.

St. Francis had not only bounded his desires, but he had either no ambition, or he considered his present condition as above his wishes. From his humility, he was often astonished that God had permitted him to obtain the rank and station of Bishop, and sometimes trembled at the responsibility it laid him under. Loving his neighbour, he was surprised at seeing himself advanced before many whom he esteemed worthier than himself.

When commiserated on the meagre revenue which remained to support his dignity, "What" said he "had the Apostles! how many deserving persons there are who have less." Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. &c. &c. &c.

JUSTICE.

ST. FRANCIS used to say that to exercise justice well, we must make ourselves purchaser when we sell, or seller when we buy, for the most universal injustice, and which is oftenest seen, is, that the vendor wants to get more than the real worth of his merchandize, and that the purchaser desires to pay less than the due price; and hence proceed an infinite number of frauds and dishonourable actions in commerce. He used to say that long ago justice had but one arm, and wore an empty sleeve. In the distribution of rewards and punishments, she seems now bereft of her right hand—Virtue no longer obtains its recompense; but the left hand is still stretched forth to awe crime, as the Proverb says, “Public punishments are less for the guilty than for the miserable.” Favour or power may have subtilty enough to palliate or excuse the greatest crimes, though Scripture declares—“He that justifieth the wicked, and

he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Proverbs xvii. 15.

INNKEEPERS.

St. FRANCIS highly esteemed those persons who kept Inns, and entertained travellers, provided they were civil and obliging, saying, that no condition in life, he thought, had greater means of serving God and men; for it is a continual exercise of benevolence and mercy, though like a physician, the fee is paid.

One day after dinner, my friend was amusing us with his entertaining conversation, and the subject of innkeepers being accidentally started, the different persons present very freely gave their opinions on the subject, and one among them declared the whole set to be rogues.

This did not please St. Francis; but as it was neither a fit time nor place for reproof, nor was the sarcastic gentleman in a mood to receive it, he turned the dis-

course by telling the following anecdote:—

“A Spanish pilgrim, little burdened with money, arrived at an inn, where, after having served him very ill, they charged him so much for his bad fare, that he loudly exclaimed at their injustice. However, being the weak one, he was forced to give way, and be satisfied. He left the inn in anger, and observing that it was facing another inn, and that in the intermediate space a cross had been erected, he soothed his rage by exclaiming, ‘Truly this place is a second Calvary, where the Holy Cross is stationed between two thieves,’ (meaning the two innkeepers). The host of the opposite hotel, without appearing to notice his displeasure, coolly asked what injury he had received from him, which he thus repaid by abuse? ‘Hush, hush,’ said the pilgrim; ‘my worthy friend be not offended, you are the good thief; but what say you of your neighbour, who has flayed me alive.’”

"This civility," pursued St. Francis, "soothed the pilgrim's wrath; but we should be careful not to stigmatize whole nations or trades by terming them rogues, impertinent, &c., for even if we have no individual in view, each individual of the nation or trade is a sufferer by the sarcasm, and cannot like to be so stigmatized."

To this I must add that St. Francis so highly esteemed innkeepers, that in travelling he forbade his servants to dispute about their charges, and ordered them rather to pay than to expostulate: and when told that the bills were unreasonable, and they asked more than they deserved, he would reply "What ought we to reckon in the account for their trouble, care, civility, and frequent disturbances at night? certainly these cannot be too well paid."

This goodnature of my friend was so well known, that the innkeepers were always anxious to present their bills to him rather than to his servants; or else to throw themselves on his liberality, well

was no more effectual spur to Divine love, than the consideration of the sufferings and death of our Lord. He called it the greatest and the most forcible motive to piety. I asked how meekness and violence could agree?

“Just as the Apostle says,—‘The love of Christ constrains.’ And as in another passage of the Sacred writings we read ‘Love is strong as death.’ &c. &c. We cannot deny that love is, of all mild emotions, the mildest—the very sweetener of bitterness—yet we find it compared to death and the grave; the reason of which is, that nothing is so forcible as gentleness, and nothing so gentle and so amiable as firmness.

“What can be softer than honey, and oil, but when boiling, what is capable of receiving such heat? Nothing is gentler than a bee, and nothing more piercing than its sting.

“Jesus on the cross is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the solution of Samson’s enigma: from his wounds we receive

the clearest honey; its sweetness is our great consolation: and as the death of our Redeemer is the highest proof of his love for us, it ought to be the strongest motive for us to love him.

“It is this exceeding love in dying for us, of which Moses and Elias spoke on Mount Tabor, during the glory of the transfiguration, to teach us that in the eternal state of glory, of which the transfiguration was a foretaste, after the consideration of the goodness of God, contemplated and loved in himself and for himself, the most powerful motive for love towards the great Saviour, will be the remembrance of his death and sufferings:—for this the Angels and blessed Spirits sing ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Glory, and honour, and power!’”

THE LIGHT OF PIETY.

ST. FRANCIS held the light of piety in great esteem, and considered those per-

sons happy, who, by spreading a good example, caused it to shine in the world; not that they might receive praise, but that their Father which is in Heaven, from whom proceeds every good and every perfect gift, might, in them, be glorified.

There is no doubt but that those who enlighten the world by a good life, and lead others in the way of righteousness, will one day shine as stars in the firmament.

Certainly if woe is pronounced by Him who cannot lie, against those who bring scandal into the world, what benediction must await those who edify by an exemplary life, and who lead souls into virtue by the splendour of their own good qualities? St. Paul said of such persons, that they were a sweet savour of Christ: that they had eternal life.

A gentleman who disapproved of the institution of the visitation, abruptly asked the Bishop of Geneva, what use it could be to the church?

With unruffled mildness he answered—

“To follow the example of the Queen of Sheba.”

“What example?” said the gentleman.

“Honour to a greater than Solomon, and bringing to the militant Jerusalem the odours and precious perfumes of pious example.”

DEPENDANCE ON GOD.

ST. FRANCIS used to say, that when we seek to be justified by men, it is done basely, cowardly, obscurely; but when we throw ourselves on God, it is done loudly, openly, evidently. If innocent, our innocence is sooner or later made to appear; for they who put their trust in God, are never confounded. “Because thou hast trusted in me, therefore will I deliver thee.”

Take for example, the Virgin Mary, though knowing the perplexity of Joseph on discovering her situation, her modesty did not permit her to declare the honour.

vouchsafed to her, in becoming mother of the word Incarnate! She depended entirely on God's providence, and accordingly the truth was revealed to Joseph by an Angel.

St. Paul desires us not to avenge ourselves, but rather to give place unto wrath: giving us an excellent lesson of perfect confidence in God.

EQUANIMITY.

I know nothing more sedulously inculcated by St. Francis, than the absolute necessity of equanimity of mind: as this life is a voyage to the harbour of salvation, we must be careful pilots, and hold strait the helm amidst the inequality of the waves.

We must imitate the mariners, who guide themselves by continually observing the pole. Our guide is the Will of God, on which our eyes should continually be fixed. Inequality of mind proceeds from attention to secondary causes, and thus

our humour changes with every changing occurrence.

But when, through all the strange variety, we can still perceive the unalterable Will of God, who distributes as he sees best, sickness and health, wealth and poverty, life and death; and when we reflect, that from every circumstance we may extract causes and means to glorify God, we enter into the Christian contest, which produces perfect equanimity of temper.

HURRY.

ST. FRANCIS approved of the device of an ancient Emperor—"Make haste slowly," and this also—"If good enough, soon enough." He did not so much approve of undertaking many things, as of having a few well done. One of his frequent sayings was—"Little and well." Take care not to place perfection in a multiplicity of good actions, external or internal.

But then what is to become of the insatiable thirst for spiritual excellence, of

which proficient in piety speak? They never say "It is enough"—They never imagine that they have attained, but still press on.

"It is to the roots of that piety rather than to its branches, that we should cling. You cling to the branches when you wish to perform many virtuous actions, of which some are defective, and some are useless and need pruning, like a vine, to enable the fruit to come to perfection; and you cling to the roots when you aim at doing little with great perfection,—I mean, with great love to God, in which consists Christian perfection:—thus the Apostle exhorts us to be "rooted and grounded in love," that we "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that" we "might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephes. iii. 17, 18, 19.

But can we ever do too much for God? must we not hasten to work before the

night cometh, when no man can work?—ought we not to do all the good we can, in the short time that remains?

“These are admirable truths, and deserve to be carefully remembered; but they do not contradict what I say,—that it is better to do a few good actions well, than many imperfectly.”

And what constitutes the perfection of a laudable action?

“1st.—It requires zeal or fervour. 2ndly.—steadiness or fortitude. 3rdly.—a pure intention. Now an action comprising these three requisites, is worth many that are 1st.—cold. 2ndly.—wavering. 3rdly.—without so sincere a motive.”

To grow in perfection, do not seek so much to multiply exercises of virtue, as to increase the fervour, force, and purity of the motive. In more ordinary actions, a little virtue, adorned by an ardent, steadfast, and pure love for God, is incomparably more acceptable, and gives greater glory to God, than an uncommon action

with a heart indifferent, unsteady, or double.

“There was a society of holy men,” said St. Francis, “who one day accosted me thus,”—“Oh! sir, what can we do this year, last year we fasted and did penance thrice a week, what shall we do now, must we not do something more, both to testify our gratitude for the blessings we have received in the course of the last year, and also that we may make some progress in the ways of God?”

“Very right,” I replied, “that you should always be advancing; however, your progress will not be made by the methods you propose—of increasing your religious exercises—but by the improved heart and dispositions with which you perform them, trusting in God more and more, and watching yourselves more and more:—last year you fasted three days in each week; if you double the number of fasts this year, every day will be a day of abstinence, and the year following what will

you do?—you will be obliged to make weeks of nine days long, or else to fast each day twice over. Those persons are fools who, instead of applying themselves to the performance of their respective duties, wish to suffer martyrdom:—as greatly would they be deceived, who think they can eat twice as much as it is possible to digest. We have not enough spiritual zeal to perform all we undertake in order to excel, and yet we will not give up the anxious desire of wanting to do more than we can.”

PRUDENCE AND SIMPLICITY.

“I do not know,” said St. Francis, “how that poor virtue, prudence, has offended me, but I cannot cordially like it—I care for it by necessity, as being the salt and lamp of life. The beauty of simplicity charms me—I would give a hundred serpents for one dove.”

“Both together, they are useful, and scripture enjoins us to unite them; but, as

in medical compounds, many drugs must be put together to form a salutary draught, so I would not place any reliance on an equal dose, for the serpent might devour the inoffensive dove."

"People say, that in a corrupt age like the present, prudence is absolutely requisite to prevent being deceived. I do not blame this maxim, but I believe it is more Christian to let ourselves be devoured, and our goods spoiled, knowing that a better and more lasting inheritance awaits us. A good Christian would rather be robbed than rob others—rather be murdered than murderer—martyred than tyrant:—in one word, it is far better to be good and simple, than shrewd and mischievous."

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR FOR
GOD'S SAKE.

THE universal charity which the Holy Ghost pours into the hearts of men, makes us love God for his own sake, and our

neighbour for God's sake. He desires that we should so love, for by this love he is glorified.

This is properly loving one another in God, and for God; not looking to our own things, but to our neighbour's, from consideration of God. This love is rare, most persons seek their own interest, and not the things of Christ.

Those acts of charity which we exercise towards our neighbour, are the most perfect in the estimation of God, inasmuch as they tend purely to God; but the services we render our friends, from inclination, are of minor merit, because of the great pleasure we have in performing them, and that in general they proceed more from natural affection than from the love of God.

In loving our neighbour for God's sake, our affection is greater and more perfect: from an earthly affection it is become a Heavenly principle; from human, Divine; from temporal, Eternal. St. Francis used to say that natural friendships were not

lasting, because they had no solid foundation; and as soon as they received any check, they chilled, and friends separated; but when friendship is founded on piety, it is permanent and solid:—all other chains to unite hearts are made of sand or glass, but this of holy charity is formed with gold and diamonds.

You must consider your neighbour as resting on the bosom of our Saviour. He who does not think thus, runs great risk of loving less sincerely, less constantly, less equally; but in the arms of mercy, who would not love, support, and bear with him?—who would find him disagreeable, and tiresome?—on the bosom of our Lord he is amiable, and beloved, and we would die to serve him. All other affection is not love of Christ,—does not merit the name of Christian charity.

TOKENS OF GOOD-WILL.

ARE not tokens of good-will given against our inclinations, to persons we dis-

like, so many tokens of treachery and duplicity, inasmuch as our actions and hearts are at variance?

The question is readily answered, if we distinguish sense from reason, aversion being an effect only of the former: signs of benevolence are no treachery—they are more excellent being performed with effort, and shew the empire of reason over passion:—that is the holy violence which takes the Kingdom of Heaven by assault, and is agreeable to God, to whom duplicity is so hateful, that he pronounces a malediction against hypocrites.

But if those whom we thus treat, knew the conflict passing within us, what would they think of us?

We must not care for the opinion of men, so much as for the approbation of God. If they judge according to the flesh, they should pity the miserable rebellion of passion against reason; but if they judge according to religion, their verdict must be in our favour, since it would be con-

formed to that of God, who is the God of truth, and knows the secrets of the heart.

One ounce of reasonable love is better than a pound of blind affection, which resembles animal instinct, that often cheats reason, and reduces it to its own level. What we do from religious motives, against the movements of passion, shews that grace abounds, and has its perfect work. What we do with great pleasure, we should be suspicious of, or at least, should make us doubly watchful; principally, in brotherly love, where there are so many hidden ambushes, so many things to turn us from the holy love of God;—sympathy, complacency, honorable interest, the useful or the agreeable,—they are so many thieves, which rob us of our motives, and prevent our seeing God; so that what is begun in piety, ends in worldly-mindedness.

Passion is like Delilah, who hushed Sampson to sleep that she might overcome him;—it makes reason sleep. There is nothing bad in loving an agreeable per-

son for God's sake, provided the love of God is greater than the delight in his agreeableness; but as it is difficult (indeed impossible) to look on a mirror and not see the reflection of our own face, to see and not observe, to observe and not be pleased, to be pleased and not in self-conceit, to forget the mirror, so it is very difficult not to see ourselves in the affection we bear our neighbour; instead of which, we should love him purely, that is to say, because God is in him, and he in God.

LOVE TO BE HATED—HATE TO BE LOVED.

You must delight in obloquy for God's sake.—“Blessed are ye,” says our Lord, “when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” Matt. v. 11. Marvel not “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you: If ye were of the world, the world would

love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 18, 19. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." James iv. 4.

Thus must you love to be hated—

1st.—You must hate to be loved, except for God's sake, because of the great danger that mere human friendship (how pure soever in its origin) should degenerate.

2ndly.—To wish to be loved, except for God, is a robbery:—it is to defraud God of a part of the hearts of his creatures, which when entire, are not large enough to love God sufficiently, as he is infinitely greater than our hearts.

3rdly.—It is to raise the jealousy of God, who allows no rival in our hearts: he must reign and rule there supreme,—our king.

4thly.—It is gross vanity to imagine ourselves deserving any affection from others.

Oh! my God, take me from the world, or take the world from me:—disunite our affections from the world, or the world from our affections! All that is not God is nothing, or insignificant:—what should we desire in heaven or earth, but God only?

ON OVER THOUGHTFUL MINDS.

St. FRANCIS did not approve of over-thoughtful minds, who ponder for an hour over trifles;—they resemble silk-worms entombing themselves in their own work.

Continual reflections on ourselves, and our own little concerns, take up much time, which would be better employed in decided action; often by considering too much whether we do right, we do wrong.

St. Anthony being asked how it was possible to know when men prayed acceptably, he replied, “By not knowing it themselves. He prays well, whose attention is so wholly engrossed by God, that he does not perceive himself to be praying.

He who counts every step he takes, will make but little progress in a day."

"He," said St. Francis, "who is very ardent in endeavouring to serve God, has neither inclination nor time to think of himself—his whole heart is elevated beyond himself; he does not descend to consider his own proceedings, and determine whether or not they satisfy him. Alas! our approbations and congratulations are not pleasing in the eyes of God; they satisfy our miserable self-love only. But say you, 'Ought we not to watch over our proceedings, especially in the service of God?'

"I reply, that we must make a difference of times; I do not say that we are *never* to consider our ways; that would be to live like mere brutes, without employing our reasoning faculties; but there is a time for all things, as says the wise man,—‘a time to act, and a time to reflect.’ The painter does not stop between each stroke, to observe the effect produced, he does it by intervals."

“Serious examinations of conscience, are right, at morning, at night, and at noon. Every good Christian should be careful to wind up the time-piece of his heart, and even in the course of the day it is well from time to time, to observe what aspect it wears. To do nothing but consider ourselves, is not to give glory to God by our lives; and in the end, this unremitting attention proves so inconvenient, that it ends in mere selfishness. Salt and sugar are good things, but they must be taken in moderation.”

ON SUPERIORS.

SOME persons complained to St. Francis that they had an ignorant master set over them, in lieu of a too rigid one, and added to their murmurs, words grossly injurious. St. Francis said, “you should never speak in this manner of your superiors, let their worthlessness be ever so great: it is God’s will we should obey even the bad and un-

thankful, for 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' " Rom. xiii. 2.

He defended the aspersed master, and said, "If Balaam was well instructed by an ass, you have every reason to be sure that God, who has given you such a superior, will have you instructed in the manner he thinks best, though it may not be most pleasing to you."

"I understand that this good person is very mild, and that if his erudition is not great, his admirable example is more than equivalent to that want. It is better to be directed by one whose actions are better than his words, than by one who says but does not."

EQUIVOCATION.

ST. FRANCIS hated equivocation, and called it an attempt to canonize falsehood. The best and most successful policy is sincerity. Worldly prudence, and selfish ar-

tifices, form the wisdom of the children of this generation; but the children of God walk in the strait road of duty, without doublings or windings, and have no veil to conceal their hearts. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." Prov. x. 9. Falsehood, duplicity, dissimulation, are equally the signs of littleness of mind.

"If the lying lips" says the wise man "kill the soul, what does the deceitful tongue, that speaks from a double heart?"

He said of this doctrine, fabricated by the father of lies, what our Lord said of the Pharisees, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. xxiii. 15. Those who think religion may be benefitted by artifice, injure the cause they wish to support. Nothing can be such an outrage against truth, as duplicity; and of the various species of falsehood, what is so mean as equivocation?

JUDGE NO ONE.

MAN sees the external action. God alone sees the heart; to him it belongs to search the heart, and penetrate its most hidden thoughts. St. Francis said on this subject, that the heart of our neighbour is the Tree of Good and Evil, which we are forbidden to touch, for God has reserved all judgment to himself.

There is a strange inconsistency in the human mind, which leads men to scrutinize with severity the secrets of their fellow creatures' souls, which it is impossible they should ever clearly discover; while they neglect to examine and probe into the springs of their own conduct, which if they do not, they certainly ought to know: the first they are forbidden, and the second they are commanded to do.

This reminds me of a woman remarkable for her waywardness, and constant disobedience to the orders of her husband. She was drowned in a river. On hearing of it, her husband desired that the river should

be dragged, in search of the body;—he bid his servants go *against* the current of the stream, observing “We have no reason to suppose that she should have lost her spirit of *contradiction*!”

You will ask if it is wrong to entertain suspicions on good and reasonable foundation? No; to suspect is not to judge, but only the first step towards it. But great care must be taken that you do not allow yourself to be drawn away by false appearances, into a hasty decision; that is the rock against which many well-intentioned persons suffer themselves to be dashed, from want of sufficient vigilance.

To avoid this evil, St. Francis gave an excellent rule, which is, that if an action may by any means be considered in more lights than one, always to choose the most favourable. If there is no apology to be found, soften the bad impression it makes by reflecting that the intention might not have been equally blameable; remember that the temptation might have been

in a soil not congenial to its nature.

He compared this error of judgment, so unreasonable and injudicious, to those lovers of luxury who feed on strawberries at Christmas, not contented with delicacies in their proper seasons. Such heated brains require the physician's discipline rather than the cool voice of sober reason.

HOW TO RECEIVE INSULT.

ST. FRANCIS was of opinion that the harvest of Christian graces was reaped in suffering insults or injuries, because that several virtues then crowd together to take their part, and be exercised.

1.—Justice, for who does not err? consequently, who does not deserve chastisement? Reflect how often you have offended God; and is it not just that you should receive correction from his creatures—his instruments for this purpose?

2.—If you are deservedly accused, simply acknowledge your fault, and confess it

before God and man; and thank him who has enabled you to see it, though he may have done it ungraciously, recollecting that medicines are not less the restoratives of health because they are nauseous.

3.—If the accusation is false, you must tranquilly, and without anger, bear witness to the truth, for this is a debt due to veracity, and to the edification of your neighbour, who might be scandalized at a silence which appeared a tacit avowal of guilt.

4.—Having done this, if the accusation is repeated, do not aim at exculpating yourself further, but give place to wrath, in practising patience, meekness, and silence.

5.—Prudence then bears her part, for slander that is despised, sinks into oblivion; but if you oppose anger to it, nothing you can urge will obtain any credit.

6.—Discretion follows prudence to exercise moderation.

7.—Next comes strength and stedfast

courage in subduing yourself.

8.—Temperance holds the reins of the passions, that they may not overstep the proper bounds.

9.—Humility, which will enable you not only to submit to the mortification, but to feel grateful for it.

10.—And even Faith, which (according to St. Paul) has closed the jaws of lions, and which shews to us Jesus Christ, the great Author and finisher of our salvation, reviled, calumniated, treated with ignominy, and yet enduring it all like one who heareth not, and is dumb, and who doth not open his mouth.

11.—Hope, by which you look forward to a crown incorruptible, which fadeth not away, when for a short time you shall have endured tribulation.

12.—And lastly, Charity, which is long-suffering, kind, gentle, forgiving, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.

Oh! how should we prize those affronts

and injuries which we receive, were we indeed anxious for the salvation of our souls! How precious would they appear to us if we duly considered them as opportunities afforded us for improving in those virtues which are pleasing in the sight of God!

HUMILITY.

ST. BERNARD was *said* to possess the gift of miracles in so great a degree, that nothing appeared too difficult for him to effect. When the world applauded his powers, and praised him for his wonderful actions, he wept bitterly. Some one asked what caused his grief? “Know you not” he answered “that it is written in the Holy Scriptures, that ‘many who wrought miracles in the Lord’s name, will be rejected; and the lowly and poor in spirit received in preference:’ it is because the possessor of this gift is exposed to popular applause, and consequently is tempted to vain glory—the great enemy of

humility; and I weep to find myself in so dangerous a situation."

St. Francis participated in these modest feelings of St. Bernard, for when sick persons were brought to him with the idea that he was able to heal them by the efficacy of his prayers, and that they frequently recovered, knowing also how much he was esteemed for his piety, he would sigh and lament the celebrity for which he might one day pay dearly.

IMPATIENCE.

ST. FRANCIS was a declared enemy to eagerness, which he called the delirium of devotion; for the spirit of true devotion is mild and equal, but impatience is turbulent and uneasy; and while it thinks itself building, it is in fact destroying.

The worst kind of imitation is that which tries to do several things at once. He said it was like wanting to thread several needles at the same time:—he who under-

takes too many things, will succeed in none.

In whatsoever St. Francis did, he applied his whole mind to the business immediately before him, as if it were his only care in this world.

He used sometimes to pass whole hours in listening to persons of little consequence, who talked entirely of their own trifling concerns. "To them" he would say, "They appear great, and they require as much advice and consolation as if they really were so. God knows I wish not for any more noble employment; all occupations are equally interesting to me, that can further his glory;—while I am employed about these petty affairs, I am not neglecting more important duties. It is sufficient for me, that I am fulfilling the will of God. It ennobles the most insignificant action, to undertake it with an ardent wish to please God, to whom all our works are due; not from any intrinsic merit in the work, but for the charity which gives

it animation. The charity is acceptable in as much as it is pure, and the purity for the singleness of the intention."

ON BENIGNITY AND PATIENCE TOWARDS
OURSELVES.

SINCE the degree of affection which we are commanded by God to feel for our neighbours, ought to be measured by the reasonable and Christian love which we bear towards ourselves — since charity, which is benign and patient, obliges us to correct our neighbours for their failings, with great gentleness; it does not appear right to alter that temper in correcting ourselves, or to recover from a fault with feelings of intemperate and bitter displeasure.

"What?" perhaps you will say, "are we to flatter ourselves in our sins!"

But why do you suppose it needful to flatter your neighbour, in reproving him mildly? Was it not the oil of sinners that

the Prophet refused to have his head anointed with? and ought you not to imitate the good Samaritan, who poured wine and oil into the wounds of the deserted traveller, mixing the sharpness of reproof with the softness of kind expressions. If you reprimand your neighbour with menaces and contempt, you may irritate but will not reclaim him; it would be to mix gall with his food, and vinegar with his drink.

As therefore we must pour a greater proportion of oil than of vinegar, into the wounds of others, why are we to be less charitable to ourselves? "No man hates his own flesh." And because we are to do to others as we would be done by, reason tells us that we should behave to ourselves as it is our duty to behave to others.

When you fall into any sin, directly examine your heart, and ask it if it still preserves an ardent and unbroken determination to serve God; if, as I hope, the answer is in the affirmative, and that it would

rather endure any tortures than break its resolution, bluntly inquire "whence proceeds this failing? why art thou so unworthy?" It will answer, "I was taken unguardedly, I scarcely know how, but my principles remain unshaken." Alas! you must pardon this poor heart,—the offence was not wilful, but rather proceeded from infirmity. Correct it mildly, and with tranquillity, and do not vex it further, by needless anger:—say to it, "well then my heart, still my friend, let us take courage, and proceed on our way, but with more watchfulness than heretofore; we will arise and go to our God, and seek protection from him." Alas! you must be compassionate to your own soul, and not overwhelm it with indignation, when you find it to be an unintentional offender.

St. Francis disapproved of severe self-accusation, and of exaggerating one's own errors. Not that he treated them with indifference, on the contrary, he wished only that the mind should not be

discouraged, and the heart made harsh on the plea of humility. It is necessary to poise the judgment with great nicety, and to walk in the narrow path of humility without despair of renewed exertion—without humiliation.

“Be just,” said he; “neither accuse nor excuse yourself precipitately. If you pronounce your soul guiltless, without proper grounds, it will become presumptuous;—if you declare it guilty, without sufficient evidence, it will deprive it of the power of exertion, and render it pusillanimous: proceed on the grounds of simple truth, and you will walk with security.”

For these reasons, he often advised patience to ourselves, alleging that it is nothing more than impatience for the eyes of the mind to be darkened by the clouds of anger, and to allow extreme bitterness to arise against its own failings. A passionate judge cannot be just: it is like looking through stained glass, when every object appears tinged with the hue of the crystal.

As patience knows its perfect work, so the work of impatience is always imperfect; and it sometimes happens that we are so very severe to faults of little consequence, that anger is the worst crime of the two. Some persons have tempers so violent, that if a servant, inadvertently breaks a cup, the culprit is immediately punished with severity: in such a case, who does not see that the chastisement of the master is worse than the negligence of the servant?

“Know,” says our Oracle, “that patience is of all virtues, the one in which we are most able to attain perfection; and if we must exercise it towards others, it is equally a duty to exercise it in our treatment of ourselves. Those who aspire to the pure love of God, will oftener find their patience tried by their own infirmities, than by those of others;—we must bear with our imperfection, before we can attain to perfection. We must, I say, endure it as an act of patience—not love or

cherish it:—such endurance will be the food of humility.

Thus he taught us to make ramparts of what appears indefensible; to gain by our losses; to arise with profit from our falls in the path of perfection, by throwing ourselves still more into the depths of humility.

SCALE OF VIRTUES.

1st.—ST. FRANCIS preferred the virtues most frequently called into action—the commonest—and to exercise which, opportunities are oftenest found.

2ndly.—He did not judge of the greatness and supernatural excellence of a virtue by an external demonstration, forasmuch as what appears a mere trifle may proceed from an exalted sentiment of charity and great assisting grace; while on the contrary, great shew may exist where the love of God operates but slightly, though that is the criterion by which we may judge whether or not a good work

becomes acceptable to God.

3rdly.—He preferred the virtues of more general influence, rather than those more limited in their good effects, (the love of God excepted). For example, he preferred prayer as the star which gives light to every other excellence; piety, which sanctifies all our actions to the glory of God; humility, from which we have a lowly opinion of ourselves and our actions; meekness, which yields to the will of others; and patience, which teaches us to suffer all things; rather than magnanimity, munificence, or liberality, because they embrace fewer objects, and their influence is less generally felt on the heart and temper.

4thly.—He was often inclined to doubt the use of dazzling qualities, because by their brilliancy they give an opening to vain glory—the bane of all intrinsic worth.

5thly.—He blamed those who never set any value on virtues till they have gained the sanction of fashion, (a very bad judge

of such merchandize),—thus preferring ostensible to spiritual benevolence; fasting, penances, corporeal austerities, to gentleness, modesty, and self-government, which are of infinitely more value.

6thly.—He also reproved those who would not seek to obtain any virtues which were unsuited to their inclination, to the neglect of what their duties more particularly required, serving God as it pleased themselves, and not in the manner which he commands. So common is this error, that a great number of persons, some very devout, suffer themselves to fall into it.

WE MAY BE VERY REGULAR IN DEVOTION,
AND VERY WICKED.

“Do not deceive yourself,” said my revered friend, “it is possible to be very devout, and yet very wicked.”

“Very hypocritical,” I replied, “and not sincerely pious.”

“No; I speak of intentional devotion.”

This enigma appearing to me inexplicable, I begged he would explain his meaning more clearly.

“Devotion of self, and of nature,” he answered, “is only a morally acquired virtue, and not a Heavenly one assisted by Grace; otherwise it would be theological, which certainly it is not.

“It is a quality subordinate to what is termed religion; or as some say, it is only one of its effects, or fruits, as religion is in itself subordinate to that one of the four cardinal virtues called Justice, or righteousness.

“You well know that all moral virtues, and also faith and hope, which are theological, may subsist with sin. They are then without form or life, being deprived of charity, which is their substance, their soul, and on which all their power depends.

“If it were possible to have such faith ‘as could remove mountains,’ and yet no charity—if I were a true prophet, and a bad man, like Saul, Balaam, and Caiphas

—if I could work miracles as it is supposed Judas did, and yet be a wilful sinner as he was—if I were to bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and suffer martyrdom in the agonies of burning, without charity; much more may I be at once devout, nay even devout and yet wicked, very wicked, because devotion is a testimonial to religion rather than a religious action.

“You need no longer be astonished at hearing me say that the extremes of sin and piety meet in one person, when faith, mercy, patience, and stedfast fortitude may exist in the highest degree, and yet be tainted and spoiled by the mixture of pride, envy, hatred, intemperance, and other heinous vices.”

“What then is real devotion?” I demanded.

“I have already told you,” continued the Bishop, “that it is possible to be very devout, and to possess true devotion, though from want of the life-giving principle of charity, it is a dead work.”

“Is inactive devotion sincere?”

“Yes, certainly, as a corpse is a real body, though deprived of its soul.”

“But,” I continued, “though a real body, the corpse is not a real man.”

“It is not an entire, complete human being, but is the perfect body of a man, and the body of an entire man, though dead; and thus devotion, without charity, is true devotion, but dead, not living, and actuating the soul, but remaining in the soul powerless and unfelt.

“Charity makes the man really good, but devotion makes him apparently so. In losing charity, he loses the first and principal quality he can possess, and gains in its place—not a secondary quality, but the semblance of one. You now understand the apothegm, ‘it is easy to be at once devout and wicked;’ forasmuch as guilt does not root out every acquired excellence of the mind, not even faith, unless indeed it appears in the horrid forms of infidelity and despair.”

SLANDER.

ST. FRANCIS used to say, that he who should succeed in eradicating calumny from the world, would clear it of a load of sins; and with reason, as all sin may be divided into three branches, those of thought, of word, and of action; and often the most dangerous proceed from words, for several reasons.

In the first place, criminal thoughts can only injure the person in whose heart they are indulged: they shew no bad example to the world, give no pain, cause no offence; God only knows and is offended by them. When they are heartily repented of, and forsaken, he will abundantly pardon, and blot them from his remembrance. But guilty words spread their baneful effects much farther; what has been said amiss, can be unsaid only by humble acknowledgement and confession; and even then, the heart of the neighbour remains infected by them; his ear has sucked in

the poison, and repentance will not restore health.

2ndly.—Errors of action, when they become notorious, are amenable to public correction; but detraction, if not libellous, is subject to no law, which is the cause that so many persons are guilty of it.

Lastly.—The little reparation made for calumny, adds to its danger and atrocity. Those whose duty it is to watch over the souls of their fellow creatures, are too indulgent on a point requiring the utmost severity and discipline.

DO NOT CONTRADICT UNNECESSARILY.

THERE are no persons so inimical to social peace and comfort, as those who are opinionated—fond of contradiction. They are the bane of all conversation, the scourge of society, and the origin of quarrels; while, on the contrary, meek and quiet spirits, condescending and flexible, pliant and easily yeilding to conviction,

ready to give way to the opinions and wishes of others, are living magnets, which draw all dispositions and rank into the sphere of their attraction.

It was the advice of St. Louis, never to contradict any one, unless by not doing so a fault should be incurred, or an injury sustained. The pious Monarch did not say this from any principle of worldly prudence, to which he was not friendly, or from the maxim of the Pagan Prince "that no man should be suffered to leave the presence of the King, with a feeling of discontent;" his motive was in the pure spirit of Christianity, that debates and contests should be prevented, in pursuance of St. Paul's command, "that such things should carefully be avoided."

"But is it not conniving at, and consequently sharing in, the errors and sins of your neighbours, if, when you are able, you do not oppose them?"

"When you find it *necessary* to oppose your opinion to that of another person, it

is requisite that the utmost moderation and dexterity should be used. Take care that you do not irritate your opponent—nothing is ever gained by sharpness and asperity.

“When, by tormenting a horse, you rouse his fury, if he has spirit, he will, in spite of his rider’s efforts, usurp the government of bit and bridle, and carry you—you know not where; cease then your attempt to restrain him, throw the reins on his neck, refrain from the spur and whip, he will then stop in his wild career, and again become subject to control.

“It is the same with the human heart,—press too much on it, and it feels galled; the oppression teaches it resistance: oppose it still more, and you alienate it entirely. It requires persuasion, and not constraint, which certainly causes rebellion. ‘A soft answer,’ says the wise man, ‘turneth away wrath.’”

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

To exercise the mind with the idea of the constant presence of God, was a favourite rule of St. Francis; he used to recommend it as daily bread; for as in the nourishment of the body, bread is joined to any other species of food; thus there is no act of devotion which can be more usefully and readily joined to the ordinary concerns of life, than the recollection that God is present with us.

This is the happy exercise of glorified Spirits; or rather, it constitutes the continual delight of the blessed, according to our Saviour's words, "The Angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in Heaven."

If the Queen of Sheba thought the courtiers and servants of Solomon happy because they were constantly with him, and heard the words of wisdom which he uttered, how much superior must we consider the felicity of those who eternally enjoy the presence of Him whom the An-

gels still desire to see, though they see incessantly;—a desire which keeps them in a continued thirst to gaze yet more and more. The more they see the glory of God, the more do they long to see it; thus their hunger grows from what continually feeds it.

When the nuns of the sisterhood of the Visitation assembled together, either for work or for recreation, it was their custom that one among them should be delegated, to remind the others of this delightful and salutary fact. “Remember, my sisters,” the monitor used to say, “Remember the blessed presence of God.”

“The greatest part” said the Bishop of Geneva, “of the errors and omissions of pious persons, proceed from their not constantly remembering that they act in the presence of an all-seeing God.”

HUMILITY.

ST. FRANCIS used to say, that unless humility was animated by charity, whether

of the understanding or of the heart, it became no better than a heathen virtue.

Abasement for the love of God is to be preferred when it is not what we should ourselves choose. The crosses we make, are always the most easy and light. One ounce of patient endurance, is of more value than many pounds of voluntary humiliation, however necessary it may be.

Bearing contempt, ignominy, abasement, was, in his opinion, the true touchstone of humility. It is that which renders the Christian most conformed to his Redeemer, who humbled himself to the death of the cross.

The second degree of humility is shewn in seeking willingly occasions for it, which do not proceed from extraneous circumstances; but this requires great discretion; self-love may insensibly glide into the self-examiner's breast.

It is a great degree of lowliness of heart, to delight in humiliation and scorn, to fear honours and flattery as much as little minds

enjoy them, who easily take offence at any affront.

St. Francis cited on this subject, the examples of Moses, who preferred to share the opprobrium of Israel rather than the glory of Pharoah's court; of Esther, who despised the ornaments and pomp with which she was decorated to please King Ahasuerus, whose wife she was; of the Apostles, who esteemed it great joy to suffer for the name of Jesus; and of David, who danced before the ark, indifferent to the sarcasms of Michal his wife, daughter of King Saul.

Humility should be joined to obedience, according to St. Paul's remark, that "our Saviour humbled himself, becoming obedient." You see then, that humility is to be measured by obedience. If you obey with alacrity, with cheerfulness, not murmuring, and not debating, you are really humble; and without humility, obedience must be imperfect—it cannot subsist without submission; and he who is lowly in

heart, really thinks himself as the follower of Jesus Christ, the least of his servants, considers all those he meets with as his superiors, and regards himself as the very "scorn and outcast of the people."

Every action we commit, should be seasoned with humility: our good actions should, if possible, be hid from the eyes of men, and seen by God only. We should not however, act with such constraint as never to perform what is praise-worthy before our fellow creatures, humility should be noble, simple, ingenuous, not timid or cowardly.

Nothing should be done for the paltry love of praise, and no duty left undone from the fear of applause.

"It is," said St. Francis, "a weak head that is overcome by the perfume of roses."

Above all things, never speak of yourself, either good or evil, unless from unavoidable necessity, and then speak the sober truth;—self applause and self reproach, when loudly expressed, both pro-

ceed from the root of vanity. Boasting is so generally despised, that the most vain glorious condemn it; and if expressions of contempt for one's self are not uttered with great sincerity, and from a mind sinking with the sense of its own vileness, they are the very essence of pride: it seldom happens that he who utters them is sincere, or wishes others to believe him; his aim is to appear humble, like the rower who turns his back to the port at which he desires to arrive.

HE WHO UTTERS COMPLAINT, SINS.

THIS was a favourite Apothegm of the Bishop of Geneva—"He who utters complaint, sins." Perhaps my readers may wish to know what he understood by this phrase, and whether complaint is not justifiable, and even proper, when injuries have been received; or whether in illness, complaint ought not to be made to a physician, in order to obtain relief.

To understand it literally, would, undoubtedly, be far from St. Francis's intention; he spoke of those wailings which are nearly allied to murmurs; and the reason why such complainers often sin, is, that self-love is unjust, and therefore we are apt to see our griefs and hardships highly magnified: we use exaggerated expressions to describe the slightest misfortune, which, had it befallen any other person, would have appeared to us, undeserving of consideration.

He did not object to a sufferer seeking quietly, without malice or hatred, legal redress for injuries committed against his person, his possessions, or his honour; but such is the weakness of human nature, that it is found difficult, even in a court of judicature, to repress the irritated feelings of a wounded spirit, or to preserve perfect equanimity. Thus the old proverb says "in a hundred pounds of law, there is not one ounce of amity."

In illness, it is sufficient for a patient

simply to state the symptoms of his disorder to those who may provide a remedy; such is the will of God, who has created medicine, and who orders that respect should be paid to the physician.

Excepting in cases of justice, or in illness, lamentations are not only useless, but usually criminal; as it may be seen how difficult it is for the suffering and offended plaintiff to keep within the strict bounds of truth. Be it that sorrows are the effect of innocent, or culpable causes, we may equally consider that it is the will of God we should endure them; they are both his instruments; the first absolutely so, the second by his permission, either for our chastisement or to farther our growth in virtue; so that our complaints are, in some degree, uttered against God himself.

Many persons who attended St. Francis during his illness, even in his last, have told me that they never heard him utter a single complaint. He used quietly to des-

cribe his ailments, neither seeking to exaggerate or to conceal them; yielding himself entirely to the directions of the physicians, taking, without hesitation, whatever was prescribed to him, without fear, and often with expressions of satisfaction.

ON FALSEHOOD.

You desire to understand this saying of my venerable friend "We can rarely tell a lie, however insignificant, without injuring our neighbour." The word rarely, solves the difficulty; there is no falsehood, how trifling soever it may appear to him who utters it, which ultimately will not injure the liar, or some other persons. It will injure the feelings of rectitude which he should cherish in his heart; and any man who deceives even in jest, shews that he has a double heart; and all the world knows that "the Lord will destroy the lying lips," and that he abhors the deceit-

ful man. Let your conversation be simple, unaffected, open, and sincere, if you desire to be the children of him who is the Father of Truth, or rather, truth itself.

ON GOOD DISPOSITIONS.

“REMEMBER,” said St. Francis, “that good inclinations are talents, for the disposal of which, you are accountable. Beware that you employ them in the service of him who gave them; plant on this soil the seeds of Heavenly affections, which God is ready to give, if by a perfect denial of self, you become qualified to receive them.

“There are some persons naturally inclined to certain virtues,—sobriety, modesty, charity, humility, patience, taciturnity, &c.; in which, if they cultivate them carefully, they may become singular proficient.

“The Pagan philosophers have rendered themselves illustrious by the exercise of

moral virtues; being therefore within the limits of human power to acquire them, we may, by reiterated exercises of goodness, acquire higher degrees of perfection in action.

“As the natural formation of the bodily organs advances or retards, acquiring mastership in arts, so a good disposition of mind gives great advantage in the attainment of moral excellence. But what would it profit a Christian to be pre-eminent in virtue and morality, if he lost his own soul? or to speak more explicitly, if Charity was not the motive from which they proceeded—if the love of God was not the life-giving principle on which their being hung? ‘Truly,’ says St. Paul, ‘without charity, nothing profiteth.’”

TACITURNITY.

SOME persons are silent from inclination, some from pride, others from dulness, others from melancholy; but few preserve

silence as a virtue, and check loquacity from moderation and good sense.

The conversation turned one day on a person who sought the reputation of being a man of deep understanding, by the practice of great silence.

"Well, then," said St. Francis, "he has discovered the secret of purchasing celebrity with very little expense!" After a pause, he continued—"Nothing so much resembles a man of sense, as a silent fool.

"There is no wisdom in preserving unbroken silence; the wisdom consists in knowing when to speak and what to say, and in what place and time not to speak.

"To make taciturnity a virtue, it must, like all other virtues, be moderate, and avoid the two extremes."

WISHING FOR DEATH.

"Is it," you ask, "lawful to wish for death, that we may cease to offend God by committing sin?"

You shall hear what St. Francis said on the subject:—"It is always dangerous to encourage a wish for death, because this desire haunts the breasts of those who either are arrived at a great degree of holiness, or else of those who are the prey of melancholy; and not of those who, like us, are in a state of mediocrity.

"David, St. Paul, and several other saints, are cited as having expressed this wish; but there would be great presumption in borrowing the words of saints, when we have not their sanctity; and to imagine we had it, would be an inexcusable vanity.

"Forming such a desire from grief, wearisomeness of life, or from vexation, is another error much allied to despair."

But it is argued it originates from a fear of displeasing God?

"Hatred of sin must possess astonishing empire over a mind, to excite in it a wish, which in the saints arose only from longing to enjoy the presence of God, not from a fear of offending him. Nor can I help

doubting, that those who ascribe to themselves timidity as their sole motive, have some secret uneasiness which renders life a burden, and causes present misery. And after all, it is not the pure pleasure of glorifying God which draws this desire from your heart, or at least, this expression of it from your lips; the intention is only not to dishonour him, nor to diminish his visible glory by our actions.

“What is the end which you propose to yourself? Is it to enter into the joys of Heaven? Not being a sinner, is not qualification sufficient; the promise of eternal life is to those who do what is right in a manner acceptable to God; ‘who by patient continuance in well-doing,’” &c. &c.

**ST. FRANCIS REPROVES THE CARDINAL DE
BELLAY’S SECOND MURMUR.**

I ONE day complained to my friend of several serious injuries done to me by per-

sons eminent for goodness. He replied—
“do you not know that no insect stings so sharply as the honey-making bee?”

He then poured this oil into my wounds:—“Recollect by whom our blessed Saviour was betrayed; he said, by the mouth of one of his prophets, ‘I have received these wounds in the house of my friends.’ Your adversaries are persons of virtue, but their zeal is faulty; they will readily do you justice when they perceive their errors. Pray to God that he may open their eyes, and free you from the oppression of calumny. However, at the worst, you may exercise the Christian virtues of loving your enemies, blessing them that curse, doing good to them that hate, and praying for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may prove yourself the child of your Father which is in Heaven. Matt. v. 44, 45. Pour out your soul before God, and say ‘they curse, but do Thou bless them.’”

He added this useful observation:—“If

own distresses, which they take no interest in, and may perhaps laugh at;—if they are disposed to take our part, so much the worse, for the evil is magnified, and its existence prolonged.

A lady complained to him that her husband, when in good health, used to leave home, and go to the army, whence he returned wounded and ill, and rendered so petulant by suffering, that it was scarcely possible to live with him. St. Francis spoke to her in these words:—"What is the reason that your husband and you cannot live happily together, either in health or sickness? If your attachment for one another had religion for its foundation, it would be subject to no vicissitude, in health or in sickness, together or apart; you would love one another with unshaken constancy. Pray fervently to God for his grace to change your hearts; without it I can give you no hopes of peace or happiness."

MONSIEUR DE BELLAY'S THIRD
LAMENTATION.

I LAMENTED bitterly to St. Francis of very hard treatment which I had received. "To any other person," he said, "I should apply the unction of consolation, but the consideration of your situation in life, and the sincerity of my affection for you, render any such expression of civility needless. Pity, would inflame the wound you have received: I shall, therefore, throw vinegar and salt upon it."

You said that it required amazing and well-tried patience, to bear such an insult in silence.

"Certainly, yours cannot be of very fine temperament, since you complain so loudly."

But it is only in your friendly bosom, in the ear of your affections, that I pour out my sorrows. To whom should a child turn for compassion, but to a kind parent?

"Oh you babe! Is it fit, do you suppose, for one who occupies a lofty station

in the Church of Christ, to encourage himself in such childishness? 'When I was a child,' said St. Paul, 'I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' The imperfect articulation, so engaging in a playful infant, becomes an imperfection if continued in riper years. Do you wish to be fed with milk and pap, instead of solid food? Have you not teeth to masticate bread, even the bitter bread of grief?

"Instead of complaining to an earthly friend, say with David to your Heavenly Father, 'I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing.'

"Perhaps you will reply, 'my hardships proceed from men unjust, and rapacious, not from the Almighty.'

"Do you not know how to see the will of God expressed in secondary causes: he permits the malice of men either to punish or to exercise you in virtue. Job was more clear-sighted; he could say 'the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.'

He did not say Satan and the Marauders; he traced the finger of God in all things; using such instruments as he chooses.

“Far are you from joining in the spirit of him who could say that the rod with which God chastened, also consoled him; that he was free among the dead; that he was like a deaf man, that heareth not; and as one that is dumb, who does not open his mouth in reply to the slanderer; who kept silence, even from good words, rather than try to justify himself.

“To all this you may say, how long is it since you became thus severe; why is mildness turned into harshness; or, as Job said, *‘where are your loving kindnesses of old?’*

“Certainly my heart is as soft, and my lenity as much alive as ever; and God knows, I love not myself better than I do you. The reproof I now give you, is what I should give myself were I in the situation you now are.

“Your complaint is a sign that you are

displeased with the outrage you have received. No one complains of what is agreeable to him; on the contrary, we rejoice at a pleasing occurrence, and call on others for congratulation—Witness the parables of the lost sheep, and the piece of silver.

“Oh ye of little faith and slender patience, where are the Divine maxims—‘Whosoever shall smite thee on one cheek, present to him the other also.’ ‘If any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also?’ Where are the blessings on the persecuted, the calumniated; and where the prayer for them which despitefully use you? the blessings on those who curse you? Are they, do you think, jewels to be locked up in a casket; or rather, are they not the Bridegroom’s seals, with which our heads and hands, our thoughts and actions, are to be stamped?

“Well, then, I must be indulgent, and pardon you; but it is on condition that in future you show more firmness, and that

when God sends you the blessings of adversity, you will preserve them in the silence of your own breast, and not let the perfume evaporate by exposure to unfriendly gales; thank God from and in your heart, for deigning thus to give you a cross to bear, in imitation of his blessed son.

“What! can you delight in bearing on your breast a golden cross, and then let your heart sink beneath the weight of slight affliction, and pour out bitter lamentations? You talk of patience when you possess none; and expect me to consider you as an humble sufferer, while I behold your impatience, as if the highest pitch of Christian virtue was to forbear taking vengeance, and not silence and resignation.

“Indeed I think it needless to call in the aid of patience, on so slight an occasion—you may fight without so powerful a second; a little modesty and meekness

will strengthen you sufficiently for the encounter."

Thus did St. Francis send me home ashamed of my folly, but so much strengthened by his conversation, that I felt as if the whole world insulting me would not have had power to tempt one impatient word from my lips.

In one of his letters, he thus expresses himself on the same subject:—"Nothing will give us greater calm amid the storms of life, than frequent meditations on the want, the sorrows, the sufferings, the anguish of our Saviour; on the scorn, contempt, and ill-treatment he met with. At the sight of such calamities, how small do our crosses appear, how trifling the insults which irritate, the adversities which oppress us; let us blush at imploring his strength and grace to bear them; and rather consider that a moderate share of humility, might enable us to support a heavier load."

ST. FRANCIS HEARS THAT HE HAS
BEEN CALUMNIATED.

It was several times told to my friend, that strange and disagreeable things were said against him; which is not surprising when we reflect that the lofty splendour of the sun does not at all times prevent clouds from gathering, nor is virtue too high for the shafts of slander.

Instead of entering into any vindication of himself, he replied mildly—"And is that all they can say? My enemies know me very slightly:—this to me, is flattery. It appears as if they wished me to be thought better than I am, and were rather disposed to pity than to envy me. I thank God for thus calling me to repentance; for though I do not deserve the reproaches showered on me, I have other faults requiring correction, and it is always a mercy that I am reminded of them."

Some one undertook his defence, declaring the imputation cast on his character to be unfounded. "It is a warning to

me" he said "to watch myself, that I fall not into this error. What a blessing to be shown the dangers I must avoid."

His friends grew haughty in their manners towards those who slandered him. He checked them with these words—"I have given you no licence to take up arms in my defence, let them speak; for after all, it is only a cross of words. I have to bear an airy affliction, the memory of which will perish with the sound:—tender must the skin be that is irritated by the touch of a fly. What am I, that I should be above reproof?—no doubt they see my faults more clearly than you or I do;—we are apt to give the name of calumny to unpleasant but wholesome truths.

"What injury does a man do by entertaining a bad opinion of me? I ought to think very meanly of myself; and those persons who seek to open the eyes of my mind, are my friends, not my adversaries;—they lower my vanity: shall I be angry with them, when they turn their arms a-

gainst my own foes? ”

Thus did this amiable man raise himself above insult. Modesty and humility were the virtues he practised, esteeming fortitude of too high a nature for common use.

WALK BY FAITH.

ST. FRANCIS was asked what was meant by walking before God—walking by faith. He replied, “walking by faith is, instead of obeying the dictates of our corrupt wills and affections, following worldly maxims, or being guided by the uncertain light of human reason—to obey the pure precepts of the Gospel, and to imitate the wise men who followed the star which led them to Jesus Christ.

“But walking in a lively faith, implies not merely the cold assent of the understanding to the light of revelation, but also the fervent heat of charity: like Abraham, walking in the heat of the day, acting as well as believing.

“Those who are lighted only by reason and prudence, are like wanderers who, at night, suffer themselves to be led on by an ignis-fatuus, and so fall into danger. For example—human prudence says, hate your enemies; faith says, love your enemies: prudence says, revenge thyself; faith says, forgive, as you would be forgiven: prudence bids you seek for wealth, it tells you that riches will secure happiness, and enjoins you to make your own selfish pleasures your first concern; but faith says no; blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God;—blessed are the poor in spirit;—go, sell all that you have and give to the poor;—if riches increase, set not your heart upon them;—if any man take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also. The love of riches is the root of all evil.

“Human reason esteems a blow an insufferable affront, but religion teaches that it is an honour to suffer scorn and insult for the name of Christ. To sum up

all in one word, day is not more opposed to night—light to darkness, than the Heavenly precepts of faith to the earthly maxims of worldly prudence.”

AVERSION.

It sometimes happens that a conscientious man tears from his heart the baneful passion of hatred; but, as in a tree felled to the ground, the root still remains bedded in earth. So in the human heart, when the stem of hatred is removed, aversion springs up in its place, and is so much the more difficult to eradicate, as it appears a vice of less magnitude.

We know that if we desire God should pardon our transgressions, we must forgive our brethren the injuries they have done us; we ask forgiveness on this condition from our Heavenly Father, in the words which his blessed Son has taught us; but when the fury of our tempest is past—when the winds have subsided, and the clouds

are dispersed—the waves of the ocean continue in an unwonted violence of motion. In the same manner, when, for the love of God we have granted our brother his pardon, and renounced all sentiments of hatred, we are too apt to think that we have done enough—that if we no longer bear ill-will, we have fulfilled the Christian laws of charity, little remembering that our Saviour commands us to love our enemies, and that if our good-will is not cordial, hatred still lurks unseen in the heart.

Sometimes we are disposed to say, (in all the pride of fancied virtue), “Not only do I pardon my adversary, I wish him every blessing that I could myself desire to enjoy; *but*, never will I consent to seek converse with him: that would open the wounds which Christian charity has healed—I fear I should not be able to suppress (injured as I have been) my well-grounded resentment.”

When we consider human nature—weak

as the reed bent by every blast—this reasoning appears very allowable; but it cannot be so in the eyes of God, who bids us rejoice with trembling, and that the more we distrust ourselves, the more we should trust in him. He desires humiliation without despondency,—that we lean on his strength, and not on our own weakness; this is what we learn in that passage of the Holy Scriptures, which tells us that “we are not sufficient of ourselves, but that His grace is sufficient for us;” so that having begun a good work in us, we must trust that he will bring it to a good conclusion. If he has given us grace to forgive, from the ground of the heart, and wish every blessing to our foe, let us believe that he will also strengthen us to bear the sight of the delinquent, and to resist every temptation Satan may throw in our way, to undo what has been wrought in us.

Some persons I have known, to whom these arguments have appeared so convincing, that they have declared them-

selves ready to meet their offending brother, *but*, not to speak to him, least some unguarded expression—some unwelcome reproach might escape their lips, and kindle anew the recently extinguished flame of discord, which would, they say, be worse than if there had been no reconciliation.

Certainly, if after a fever you drink cooling beverages with great eagerness, it is plainly seen that fever still heats your blood;—they who unwillingly depart out of the bondage of hatred, and cast longing, lingering glances behind, must, undoubtedly, preserve a latent feeling of bitterness in their hearts.

It is their business to throw from them, with energy and force, this secret aversion; to implore the assistance of God, that they may be able to fulfil the precepts of the Gospel, to overcome evil with good, and to bless their enemies.

I will conclude these remarks with the fine words of St. Francis:—

“The Pagans loved those by whom they

were beloved; but Christians should cherish affection for those who hate them, and for whom they feel aversion or dislike."

ON RIDICULE.

ST. FRANCIS never concealed his dislike to ridicule—his countenance alone shewed in how mean a light he considered it. When conversation took too satirical a turn, and that the satire was pointed, he tried to change the subject; but if that did not succeed, he would quit his seat and say—"Why thus trample on a poor man, this passes the bounds of discretion. We have no right to entertain ourselves at the expense of another person, when the same treatment would hurt our own feelings. How would you like to be dissected by those sharp blades — your neighbours' tongues? It is a virtue to bear with the follies and imperfections of our fellow creatures, and a vice to expose and mock them."

He used to say "a disposition to satire, is the worst propensity a man can have; it is hateful to God, and deserves heavy punishment."

One day he overheard a young lady diverting herself at the expense of one who was very plain, quizzing her defects of figure, which were entirely natural. St. Francis told her that we are all the workmanship of God; that all God's works are perfect. The young lady laughed at him for saying that all God's works were perfect. "Believe me," he said, gently, "her soul is so much the more upright, and more beautiful; believe ME, for I know it well."

This answer silenced the flippant girl.

On another occasion, hearing a gentleman that was absent ridiculed for being humpbacked, and otherwise singularly deformed, he made the same reply,—“all the works of God are perfect!”

“How perfect?” said the satirist; “the figure I speak of is evidently imperfect.”

St. Francis assumed a lively tone and replied—"Well, may there not be perfect humpbacked people, as well as people of perfect symmetry."

The unwearied questioner asked whether he spoke of internal or external perfection.

"It is enough," he replied, "that what I have said is true; let us find some better topic for conversation."

**BE CONTENT WITH YOUR CONDITION
IN LIFE.**

"LET every man," says St. Paul, "remain in the situation to which God has called him." One of the felicities of this life is to be pleased with the condition in which Providence has placed us: he who desires another, is never at peace. We should duly estimate the blessings which fall to our lot; but great care must be taken not to idolize them.

Extreme value for our own situation and rank, cannot subsist without vanity; which

may be discovered by the frequent encomiums we bestow on it, and still more by undervaluing others. To thank God that "I am not as other men are," is to return from the temple reprov'd and not justified.

St. Francis used to say to the Nuns under his care, "Daughters of the Visitation, speak humbly of your own little community; consider it as far inferior in the eyes of the world, to most Convents; but love it more than the nobler institutions, and let all who will, see the happiness you enjoy in it. In the same manner a married woman should love her own husband better than any other man, even when she respects him less highly. Who is it that does not love his native land better than countries more beautiful or more fertile? What pilot does not prefer his own small vessel to the larger ship of another man? Acknowledge that other sisterhoods may be more wealthy, and more splendidly endowed, but not more peaceful retreats for the pious, whose

hearts are wedded to their humble dwelling.”

St. Francis used to praise his friend, the Bishop de Saluces, that when he was Priest of the Oratorio of Rome, he seldom spoke of his own congregation; and when he did, it was in the most modest terms; yet so much attached was this excellent Prelate, that he quitted it with tears when the Pope removed him to a higher charge. Of other orders he spoke in the noblest manner; every thing was greater in his eyes than himself, and what belonged to him.

Far was he from the pride of those who combine censure to their neighbours, with praise to themselves—who cannot express their veneration for an ecclesiastical life, without abusing a secular—who cannot eulogize voluntary poverty, without sneering at wealth, however well disposed of; and who cannot extol a public, without depreciating a private life.

RASH JUDGMENTS.

ST. FRANCIS could never bear to hear the odium of a bad character attached to any person, in consequence of a single fault. "Virtuous habits" he would say "are not destroyed by one bad action; you cannot call a man intemperate, who, once in his life, is intoxicated,"

Whenever he heard a person called vicious, for once sinning, he mildly undertook his defence, representing the difference between a vicious course of life and an occasional fall into sin: the former he said was a habit, the latter, an action. And as one swallow does not make the summer, one error does not render a person vicious: that is to say, habituated to the vice he has fallen into.

Some person objected that charity, which forbids censure, equally forbids our judging whether any one be in a state of salvation.

He replied that "if," as St. James says, "faith is known by its works, much more

so is the more active principle—charity; the works of which, like sparks, shew where the flames burn clearest: therefore when we see a man commit a deadly sin, though we say he has lost his hopes of mercy, how do we know that the grace of God may not touch his heart, and turn him from his iniquities, by penitence? Therefore we must be careful in what manner we judge another of sin, though we are at liberty to judge favourably of him, for charity believes and hopes the welfare of her neighbour, and thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

DESPONDENCY.

THE most cowardly of all temptations is despondency. St. Francis used to say, that when our spiritual enemy had succeeded in making us despair of ever obtaining great virtue and piety, his empire over us was established, and he soon would urge us into vice.

Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself: do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them;—every day begin the task anew. The best method of attaining to Christian perfection is, to be aware that you have not yet reached it; but never to be weary of re-commencing. For, in the first place, how can you patiently bear your brother's burden, if you will not bear your own?

2ndly.—How can you reprove any one with gentleness, when you correct yourself with asperity?

3rdly.—Whosoever is overcome with a sense of his faults, will not be able to subdue them: correction, to answer a good end, must proceed from a tranquil and thoughtful mind.

COMPANY AND CONVERSATION.

SOME persons, zealous rather than sensible, as soon as they become religious,

imagine that they must flee from society and conversation, as an owl avoids the birds of daylight: thus instead of making devotion amiable and attractive, they inspire others with an aversion for what, in them, appears uncharitable and sullen.

St. Francis did not approve of this: pious persons, he said, should be the light of the world, by their example; and the salt of the earth, by making religion palatable to those who were not disposed to like it.

“But, if the salt is thrown back into the sea, from whence it was taken, it is dissolved and lost.”—

“Perhaps so; but if salt is not mixed with food, that will remain unsavoury.”

A scrupulous person asked him, if he, who was anxious to improve in goodness, could safely remain in society.

He replied—“Perfection consists not in renouncing the world, but in not loving it: it is dangerous to one who may be tempted to love the world, and the things

of the world; but to any one whose mind is strengthened, and whose heart is fortified by religion, society can do no injury. In one word, human perfection consists in perfect charity—which is the life of the soul. The primitive Christians lived in the world bodily, though their hearts were not devoted to it; and they had attained the summit of earthly perfection.”

THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF CHARITY.

ST. FRANCIS thought charity consisted in a constant recollection of the presence of God, and a constant conformity to the will of God in all things.

The surest proof we can have of being in a state of grace, is, that we have no wish or desire dissonant from the will of God; for if we have, we prefer something to God, and then charity, which must be supreme, ceases to exist.

We ought, not only to prefer God to every thing, but we ought not to love any

thing or person so highly: if we love any thing equally with God, and not for his sake—that is to say, in consideration of, and in subordination to God—we do not love him as we ought.

I do not say that in God all our affections are to concentrate; we are to love ourselves, and our neighbours as ourselves: but to love either ourselves or our neighbours equally with our God, is incompatible with charity; a heart touched by it, considers the creatures, compared to the Creator, but as the stars when compared to the glorious sun.

THE DISTRACTIONS OF BUSINESS.

THE Abbess of a convent one day complained, that the multifarious concerns which necessarily engaged much of her time and attention, prevented her from a constant devotion to God. St. Francis stopped her, by saying, "Nothing but sin can separate us from God." St. Paul

gives a sort of challenge, or defiance, to things above, and things in this world—to principalities, and powers, to separate him from the love of God—well knowing it to be impossible.

It is a manifest error to imagine that the duties of that station in life, where we are placed by Providence, should draw us from divine love; on the contrary, if, as we ought, we do all to the glory of God, they unite us still more to religion. Quitting them, to lead what is called a life of devotion, that is, of useless seclusion, prayer, meditation, and silence, is to quit God and become devoted to selfishness.

Whoever deserts his duty, to give himself up to occupations which suit his taste, (how pious soever they may appear), does nothing acceptable to God, or beneficial to himself, since, in fact, he seeks his own gratification. God must be served according to his will; we cannot serve him as we choose. What religion is that, which refuses compliance with the will of God?

There is a great distinction, but not always a perceptible one, between distraction from religion and distraction from the solace of the uninterrupted intercourse of the soul with God. Amidst the cares of government, that solace cannot always be enjoyed; but when we deprive ourselves of it, for his service, the apparent loss is a real gain—it is an exchange of sweet for solid. Since God is with us in tribulation, (as by the mouth of the Prophet he has declared), surely he will also be with us while we labour for his glory?

To comfort the Abbess, St. Francis added—"In as much as you bend all your powers to perform your duty with fervent charity, God will strengthen and assist you; serve him, and he will sustain you: His great work is the sanctifying and perfecting the souls of his servants. Be a fellow worker with God, in simply, modestly, and humbly labouring for the kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, and you may be sure that no distractions will prove in-

jurious to you. That peace is unmerited which is gained by leaving undone those duties which should redound to the glory of God."

FEAR OF GHOSTS.

FEAR is a passion natural to the human mind, and like all other passions, in itself harmless; it becomes injurious when carried to excess, and beneficial when under the controul of reason.

Some are so timid, that they dread speaking before many auditors; some fear the thunder, some the lightning; to some solitude, shadow, or darkness, brings causeless alarm: and in some persons the dread of apparitions has so great an empire, that they dare not remain alone in the dark. A celebrated Hero of the present times would probably valiantly kill his valet, if he presumed to leave his apartment, for one instant, during the whole night, so entirely does superstition unman him.

St. Francis having occasion to speak to a person under the dominion of this delusion, used these words:—

“You fear disembodied spirits; remember that the Spirit of God is every where present, and without his permission no other spirit can move or act. If you fear God, fear him only: under the shadow of his wing, no evil can come nigh unto you! When I was young, I also was tormented with this fancy, and I overcame it by accustoming myself, by degrees, to go alone (arming my soul with trust in God) to those places in which my imagination conjured up objects of terror; and now silence and darkness are delightful to me, for with them are connected ideas of the presence and protection of the Almighty, which in solitude, are most enjoyed. The Guardian Angels are present with you; ‘The truth of God,’ says the Prophet, ‘surrounds you, and covers you with his shield, fear not the darkness.’ This assurance will gain possession of your mind, as the Grace

of God increases in you. It is Grace which works that faith which maketh not ashamed."

CALM AMIDST STORMS.

It is easy to guide a vessel when the wind is favourable, and the sea calm, but not so easy to steer safely amidst whirlpools and tempests—Then it is that the skill of the pilot appears. Vulgar souls do well when nothing occurs to contradict them; but exalted virtue shines brightest in calamity and danger. The more St. Francis was crossed, the more tranquil he became; like the palm, whose roots take deeper hold in the soil when the storms batter its branches. This second Sampson found honey in the lion's jaws, peace in war; or, like the three children, he was cool in a furnace; he had roses among thorns, oil from every rock—sweetness in bitterness.—The storm cast him into a safe haven; or, like Jonas, he found an asylum in the very

whale which sought his destruction. Or, as he himself said, "I have long found a tranquillity and peace of mind, among the varied troubles and annoyances of life, that feels like a nearer union with God, and is not only the sincere, but the only remaining passion and desire of my heart and mind!"

DELIGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES.

ST. FRANCIS used to say that one of the surest signs of a soul deeply imbued with piety, is a veneration for the Sacred writings. "Whosoever is of God, heareth his words," said our Lord; and "whosoever loves God, loves his words, and will keep them in his heart. It is the mark of good sheep, to know the shepherd's voice; of those who will stand at his right hand, and hear this sentence—"Come ye blessed of my Father."

But to be a hearer of the word, is not enough; it must be put into practice; God

will be disposed to grant our prayers, inasmuch as we obey the commands he sends us by the mouth of his servants; for, as in the Lord's Prayer, we entreat forgiveness as we forgive them that trespass against us, we may be certain that he will fulfil our petitions, if we are careful to observe his precepts.

ANECDOTE OF A GOOD MASTER.

THE following Anecdote was related to me by St. Francis.

“A prelate of high rank, was so easily persuaded to receive servants, that his establishment consisted of three times as many as were necessary. He was not better served from having such numbers, though his revenues were impoverished to such a degree, that debts accumulated, and his steward had some difficulty in obtaining money to defray his necessary expenses.

“His relations, seeing his situation, ad-

vised him to part with above half his household, (hard counsel to a kind master!) but his temper was very easy, and suffering himself to be persuaded, acquiesced.

“A list was drawn up of the names of those who were absolutely useless; he sent for them into his presence, and asked if they were satisfied with the treatment they had received from him? With one accord they burst into tears, and one of them, in the name of the rest, said ‘Indeed, my Lord, we never shall meet with such a master as you are; we should be willing to live and die in your service; for in leaving you, we seem to lose all we care for.’

“What, then,” said the Bishop, “am I so necessary to you?” “Oh, my Lord,” replied the servant, “you are so necessary to our happiness, that if you desert us, we shall be miserable!”

“Since this is so,” replied the master, “my friends’ advice shall be disregarded; remain with me, all of you; some, because you are necessary to my comfort, and I

cannot do without you; and the rest because I am necessary to your comfort, and you cannot do without me. As long as I have bread to eat, you shall share it with me, and when I have no more, we will starve together." These kind words he uttered with tears streaming down his cheeks.

Afterwards, however, he freed himself, from his superfluous domestics, by placing them in the service of his friends; and many of them, by his assistance and recommendation, settled themselves happily.

"Blessed are the merciful — they shall obtain mercy."

VANITY.

It is vanity warping the understanding, that leads us to imagine ourselves greater than we are; but it is a vanity of the will, and the most dangerous kind, which leads us to aim at a condition higher than that in which we are, and to suppose we deserve it.

He who believes himself to be other than he is, is filled with self complacency, and therefore possesses a false peace of mind: but he who aims at exaltation, is in a state of continued disquietude, disdaining his equals and inferiors, and seeing no happiness but in those who are placed by rank or fortune above him in the estimation of the world! Has he gained the eminence he aimed at? he finds it only a step leading to something yet higher; and thus he wears his life away, like a traveller who passes from inn to inn, finding a home in none!

St. Francis thought he had already attained too high a rank in the church, and sought rather to descend by retiring into solitude, than to seek for greater honours: he feared the esteem that was generally felt for him, lest pleasing men so well, he should be a less pleasing servant to God.

Some one having asked him how he contrived to preserve his humility amidst applause and admiration, he replied

"You have obliged me much, by reminding me that I must preserve a pious humility. When the wind whistles in our valleys, it roots up the trees, and withers the flowers; and I who am placed on higher ground, exalted by episcopal dignity, am more exposed to danger from the blast.

"Save us, O Lord! command the winds of vanity to be still, and they will obey thy voice!"

DISCONTENT.

THERE is no error of the mind more common in the present age, and perhaps in every age, than dislike of our situation and respective duties. When the great enemy of our Salvation cannot tempt us to open and deliberate sin, he tries to undermine our virtue secretly, by making us discontented and querulous. Disgust with our own condition in life, is an evil root, from which much that is blamable proceeds.

The Holy Spirit commands us to remain in the calling where providence has placed us; the Evil Spirit whispers to us that we ought to desert our post. The great secret for effecting a happy voyage to eternity, is to pursue our way tranquilly in the true course traced for us by an all-wise Ruler. St. Francis said "do not employ yourself in things with which you have no concern; cultivate your own soil, without seeking to cast seeds in gardens which are not your own. Do not desire to be what you are not, but desire to excel in your own appointed station, Occupy your thoughts in perfecting yourself in goodness, and in bearing your own cross, be it great or small. Believe me, this is an important point in a religious life, though very little understood. Every one is ready to follow his own inclinations, but few employ those inclinations in loving what God wills, and doing what he commands;—why build castles in the air, when the foundations of your edifice are traced out for you on the

ground of duty? This is an old lesson, you cannot fail of understanding it."

HOPE AND FEAR.

To walk securely in the narrow path which leads to eternal life, we must balance ourselves with care, between hope and fear; between the fear of God's judgments, which are like the great deep, of unfathomable depth, and between the hope of his mercies, which are infinite, surpassing all his works.

"Tremble at the justice of God," said St. Francis, "but without despair; rejoice in his goodness, but without presumption. Those who have an extreme unbounded fear of eternal punishment, shew that they have more humility and reverence than reason. We must lower and humble our souls to the dust, and feel our own demerits, or we cannot be qualified for the grace accorded to sinners. It is a false humility that overcomes our love of God,

and trust in him.

“Despondency, and anguish, and hopeless remorse, are inimical to that charity which works out its own salvation, though with fear and trembling, and forbids our ever despairing of the love of God, whose will it is that no one should perish, but that sinners should repent and be saved.”

THE DIFFICULTY OF PRAYING DURING
SICKNESS.

THERE is a time for every thing; a time to act, and a time to suffer:—we do not expect roses in snow, or fruit in December: a man must have an iron constitution to suffer and be active at once: when God thinks fit we should endure pain, he does not call for the exercise of active virtues.

Some pious persons complain less of their disorders than of their inability to worship the most High in the same manner as when they were in good health. But this is a mistake, for one hour of patient endurance,

undergone from submission to the will of God, and trust in his mercies, is of more value than many exercises of devotion not animated by equal love.

The truth is, that we desire to serve God in our way, not in his; following our own inclinations rather than his will, and loving his will only when it agrees with our own desires; instead of which, we should feel disposed to follow our own desires only when they are agreeable to our Creator.

When he thinks fit that we should be ill, we long for health; when he chooses to be served by submission and resignation, we wish for exertion; when he calls upon us to exercise patience, we prefer prayer, fasting, mortification, or some other virtue more to our taste: we love virtue well sugared, but if it is offered with a bitter sauce, we refuse to swallow it. Calvary is not to us so agreeable as Tabor; not on that mountain of anguish, but in this of glory we long to build our tabernacle.

In fact, we prefer health to sickness, and

love more when at ease than when in pain; our piety is more alive when we are caressed, than when we are chastened, so inconstant are we; and instead of loving God because he loves us, we love him when we feel the immediate benefits of his bounty.—He whose charity is sincere, loves in affliction as in prosperity—in pain as in health—in grief as in joy, for as God never changes, the fluctuations of our affections must proceed from a selfish cause.

To a person who complained to St. Francis that during a long illness she could not fix her thoughts to mental devotion, which she was very fond of doing, and without which, her soul was in a state of lassitude, he said “Do not be displeased at remaining in your bed, unable to meditate;—to bear the chastisement of the Lord, is undoubtedly as needful as to meditate on him, for is it not better to bear the cross, than merely to think of it? I am sure that from your couch, you often lift up your heart to Heaven in unuttered

ejaculations, and that is sufficient;—obey your physicians, and when they order you any regimen which may interfere with fasts, prayers, or any ceremony, submit without murmuring, I entreat you, for so God wills: when your health is recovered, then indeed resume your wonted devotions, and you will find yourself supported by God.”

ON INVALIDS.

If the poor are members of Christ, on account of their poverty, so in the same manner are invalids: our Lord has said “I was sick, and ye visited me.”

St. Louis used to attend sick persons with uncovered head, and on his knees, considering them as the members of our Saviour suffering on the cross. St. Francis thus expressed his opinions to a sick person:—“When I think of you, lying in anguish on your bed, it is with a feeling of great respect—I consider you as highly honoured, thus visited by God, and as it

were, clad in his garments. Our Saviour, when on the cross, was declared King even by his enemies; and those who share his sufferings, share his glory. Do you know why the Angels envy us? for no other reason than that we may suffer for our Lord, and they never suffer for him. St. Paul, who had been in Heaven, and seen the bliss of Paradise, rejoiced in nothing but his infirmities, and gloried only in the cross of Christ."

"Pray for me," he continued; "I am most anxious to obtain the blessing of God on a work I wish to see accomplished; make supplication for me now while you endure pain, for your fervent and sincere, though short prayers, will be well received; and ask, in this time of suffering, for those Christian graces of which you stand in need."

LONG ILLNESS.

VIOLENT disorders are either soon subdued or soon subdue: languid complaints

last longer, and exercise not less the patience of the attendant than of the patient.

St. Francis said, long continued illnesses are admirable schools for teaching compassion to the attendants, and patient resignation to the sufferer; the former, like St. John, and the blessed Virgin, remain at the foot of the cross, but the latter share the agonies of our Lord, who hung on it.

But if neither party are actuated by motives of charity, how can they imitate such exalted examples of resignation and piety?—The Virgin and the beloved Apostle found tenderness agonizing, because the sufferer was beloved by them.

It was at the foot of the cross that the sword pierced the soul of the Virgin Mary—then she felt the anguish, which at his birth, was spared her;—there did the beloved Disciple drink of the bitter cup his Lord had foretold him.

The whole life of a Christian, while on earth, is a continued scene of trial.

“You are the member,” said St. Francis to one in pain, “of the crucified, and not yet of the glorified, Jesus:—the ring, the bridal garments he gives you, are crosses, sufferings, and thorns; in another world we shall have the crown of glory, the precious jewels, the banquet of love.

“This world is a quarry, in which are cut and polished, those living stones, with which the Heavenly Jerusalem is to be built.”

THE USE OF ILLNESS.

A MAN of high rank and great wealth, which he expended in magnificence and luxury, and in sumptuous living, was seized with a dangerous illness, supposed to be the effect of his intemperance, which reduced him almost to the grave. He sent to entreat the Prayers of St. Francis, saying that he was confined to his bed, in a very suffering state.

The Bishop replied coldly, “he who

used to ridicule morality, now finds the bad effects of immorality. His physician warned him that his constitution would not stand the trials he gave it. God grant that the disorder of his body may restore order to his mind; the change will be a beneficial one: God well knows how, by temporal afflictions, to prepare our hearts for spiritual blessings and spiritual enjoyments: tell him, I feel confident that his illness will redound to the glory of God, and that he will recover; but bid him beware, and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to him."

These words repeated to the sick man, consoled him much; but the sting, mixed with the honey of hope, pricked his conscience, and excited in him such a pious alarm, that by his subsequent conduct he evinced the truth of what St. Francis had said, for so entirely did he reform his life, that his former associates could hardly recognise him.

Immediately on his recovery he went to

church, publicly to return thanks to Heaven, and then visited St. Francis, gratefully acknowledging the benefit of his prayers and admonitions to him. St. Francis kindly replied—"See you not, that these bodily afflictions, which are permitted by the wisdom of God, are so mercifully ordered, that they force us to that repentance and self-knowledge which is necessary for our final happiness? Happy are those who employ them aright, and turn evil into good. God does not thus mercifully chastise all his servants; bless him for thus tenderly, like a father, chastening you with judgment:—it is good for you to have been afflicted, since it teaches that all his ways are righteous."

**WE CANNOT KNOW WHETHER WE ARE
IN A STATE OF GRACE.**

THE greatest temptation is, in my opinion, to fancy ourselves in a state of assured Grace, to suppose we have an inward as-

surance of it, not deduced from morals, simple conjecture, nor from any passage in Scripture. "He who would see the depth of Majesty," says the Holy Spirit, will be overwhelmed." "He who tries to pry into the hidden things of God, will find himself bewildered in an intricate labyrinth."

The sentence has been pronounced "No man knoweth whether he is worthy of love or hatred;" that is, not with *certain faith*. *Certain hope* he may have; and who does not rely on that infinite goodness, who will finish the good work he hath begun in us, unless our own sins raise a wilful barrier between us and mercy?

To a penitent, who, from doubts of her state, felt all the agonies of despair, St. Francis gave advice so soothing, that I think it may prove a balm to heal many such wounds.

"To examine whether you are acceptable to God, is vain; but to examine whether he is beloved by you, is needful;

consider him, and you must love a being so benevolent, so mild, so compassionate, so condescending, so good to his helpless creatures; so merciful to the penitent, so gracious to the sinner: who can forbear to love this all-adorable Parent?"

By this St. Francis meant to teach us, that the true way to ascertain our spiritual state, is to consider how we stand affected towards our God; if we sincerely love God and virtue, it is the surest test of being in a state of grace, for love is the fulfilling of the law.

SELF LOVE, AND LOVE OF OURSELVES.

THERE is great difference between these two passions; self love, is love of ourselves, but love of ourselves is not self love.

Self love is always bad,—it is mixed with every evil feeling of the heart; that selfish passion raised the wall of Babel, and drew down the judgments of God.

The love of ourselves cannot be bad ; nay, being commanded, it must be good ; we are obliged to love ourselves as members of God, and for the love of God, and to seek and wish for our real happiness, temporal and spiritual.

This self-preservation is both natural and supernatural. Natural, when it concerns the blessings of nature ; for, as the Apostle says, no man hates his own flesh, and this passion, when kept within due bounds, is not disagreeable to God, who is the Author of nature as well as of grace. Supernatural, when it concerns the blessings of Grace ; and this sentiment is as much superior to the other, as the blessings of Grace are superior to the blessings of Nature.

Spiritual self esteem may proceed from hope or from charity. That of hope, is interested, because we love God in that case from his being the Author of all our blessings, not because he is infinite goodness in his own nature, which is real charity, dis-

interested love, because then we love God for his sake, and ourselves for his sake.

We may lawfully love ourselves, though for our own sakes; but certainly we may love ourselves only for our Redeemer's sake.

"Our saviour," says St. Francis, "desires us to love him, that we may be saved; and desires that we may be saved, that we may love him to all eternity." Thus love is the way to redemption, and redemption leads to love.

Our salvation extends as much to the glory rendered to God by it, as to the glory it sheds on the beatified. Few persons reflect sufficiently on this: they consider their salvation as the means by which God glorifies them; not as it principally is—the means by which they shall glorify him: thinking selfishly of themselves only, though the glory of God is the end of all creation, and the glory of man the means employed *to* this end; for no one is glorified by God in Heaven, who is not glorified by God, that he may glorify God.

THE MOTIVES OF OUR ACTIONS CONSTITUTE THEIR VALUE.

ST. FRANCIS was invariable in thinking that the love of God was our *first principle*; the more we are actuated by it, the greater value are our actions: our works resemble not pieces of money, precious from their weight; rather they may be compared to flame, the purest part of which is farthest removed from any matter.

Some persons weigh the merit of actions by their appearance, or their difficulty, and prize only dazzling virtues, which make great shew, without considering that Christian virtues, the effects of grace, are valuable only from their motive and their aim.

In fact, it is true that considering what may be called the accidental glory of a good deed, its difficulty and its effects may deserve remark; but in essential glory, charity must be the only measure.

St. Francis was accused of making his Institution of daughters of the Visitation

too easy, and comfortable. His only reply was—"who loves much, will be much beloved, and who loves most, will be most blessed; for the reward is given to Christian Charity." This is like the doctrine of the inspired Apostle, that neither faith, nor alms, nor even martyrdom, profiteth any thing without Charity. That is the point of perfection without which, our virtues are imperfect, and our actions worthless.

THE END.





